PROMETHEUS RESEARCH SERIES 5

Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?

Internal Problems of the Workers Party

by Max Shachtman

Reprinted from *Internal Bulletin* No. 3, February 1936,
of the Workers Party of the United States

With Introduction and Appendices

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Editorial Note

The documents in this bulletin have in large part been edited for stylistic consistency, particularly in punctuation, capitalization and emphasis, and to read smoothly for the modern reader. In "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?" we have used square brackets [ ] for our editorial insertions. Where material has been inserted by Shachtman, we have left his parentheses and his attribution (—MS), occasionally adding the latter.

We have reproduced the quotations and translations which appear in "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?" as presented in the original; they often differ from the texts published in the Pioneer, Pathfinder or Monad editions. We have corrected a few dates cited by Shachtman according to the dates provided in the latter editions. The given date should enable researchers to find many of the quoted articles and letters in those volumes.

A glossary of individuals, organizations and acronyms possibly unfamiliar to the reader is provided starting on page 81. Acronyms for various organizations have been written out in full when they first occur, both in the introduction and in the main document. In cases where an acronym is derived from a language other than English, the expansion in that language is given in the glossary.

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Introduction

This bulletin reprints Max Shachtman's article, "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?", originally published in February 1936 in the *Internal Bulletin* of the Workers Party of the United States.[1*] The WPUS—formed in December 1934 through a fusion of the Trotskyist Communist League of America (CLA) and a leftward-moving centrist organization led by A. J. Muste called the American Workers Party (AWP)—was the revolutionary Trotskyist organization in the U.S. at the time. Shachtman's document, written when he was a close collaborator of pre-eminent Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon, is an excellent presentation of Leninist methods of internal party struggle, illuminated through the political disputes which had roiled the CLA in its last year of existence and were then carried over into the WPUS.

It was through these factional battles, which centered on the correct attitude and tactics toward reformist social-democratic parties internationally, that the young members of the former AWP were forged into Trotskyist cadre. Within the WPUS, a Leninist core around Cannon and Shachtman was pitted against both an ultraleft sectarian current led by Hugo Oehler and a rightist clique grouped around Martin Abern, Jack Weber and Albert Glotzer. In the course of the fight, Cannon and Shachtman won the WPUS majority. Oehler and his supporters were expelled in late 1935 for repeated, flagrant violations of party discipline. In this document, written after the expulsion of the Oehlerites, Shachtman aims most of his fire at the poisonous personalism which had led the Weber-Abern-Glotzer clique to obstruct the fight against Oehler. Shachtman's goal, as he notes in his introduction, was to draw lessons from the recent internal struggle in order to train the members of the Workers Party, particularly its youth:

> Through its bloodstream must run a powerful resistance to the poison of clique politics, of subjectivism, of personal combinationism, of intrigue, of gossip.... It must learn to think politically, to be guided exclusively by political considerations, to argue out problems with themselves and with others on the basis of principles and to act always from motives of principle.

The significance of "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?" transcends the confines of the particular controversies which occurred over 60 years ago. The document is not only of broad political interest, but it also provides one of the only detailed accounts of the internal factional struggles in the later CLA and WPUS, written at the time by one of the participants. It should be read in conjunction with Cannon's 1944 reminiscences, published as *The History of American Trotskyism*.[2] We include here as Appendix I the "Resolution on the Organizational Report of the National Committee" adopted by the CLA's third and last convention in November 1934.[3] Although Shachtman wrote that he planned to append this resolution to his document, it did not appear in the WPUS *Internal Bulletin* as promised. As Appendix II we reprint a report on the Workers Party written by Cannon in 1935 and addressed to the International Secretariat (I.S.) of the International Communist League (ICL), the Trotskyist international organization, as well as an effort to refute this report by Albert Glotzer.[4] Both are referred to in Shachtman's document. Appendix III lists the National Committee (NC) of the WPUS, established by the December 1934 fusion conference.

"Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?" was written on the eve of the formal dissolution of the WPUS, which was a condition for its cadre to enter the American Socialist Party (SP). This entry tactic, which was first advocated in 1934 by Leon Trotsky for France, has become known as the "French turn." Its implementation by the WPUS was made possible only by the sharp political struggle against Oehler, who opposed it in principle. The French turn proved more successful in the United States than elsewhere, and the Trotskyists emerged from the SP in the summer of 1937 with their membership doubled. They went on to found the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) at a National Convention which ended on 3 January 1938. The SWP remained the revolutionary Trotskyist organization in the United States until its descent into reformism in 1960-65.

Cannon's Tradition, Not Shachtman's

While Max Shachtman was the author of "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?" it does not represent the political positions or methodology attributable to the later political current that bears his name. Shachtmanism is correctly characterized by Shachtman's renegacy—his flight from Trotskyism in 1939-40, when, under the influence of the petty-bourgeois anti-Communist hysteria which greeted the Hitler-Stalin pact, he abandoned the program of unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union on the eve of World War II. At that time, Shachtman allied himself with Martin Abern and James Burnham, who figure prominently in "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?" Burnham, a philosophy professor at New York University and leader of the former AWP, is referred to in the

*Footnotes appear following the Introduction, starting on page 16.

documents we publish by his party name, West. In the course of the factional struggles detailed here by Shachtman, Burnham was won to revolutionary Trotskyism. But his time as a Marxist leader lasted only a few years. In 1939-40, Burnham was the central ideological leader of the petty-bourgeois opposition which has since become associated with Shachtman's name.

Trotsky waged the last factional struggle of his life against Shachtman, Burnham and Abern. Their argument that the Hitler-Stalin pact negated the program of unconditional military defense of the USSR was a fundamental capitulation to bourgeois anti-Communism and represented a rejection of the Marxist methodology which Trotsky applied in characterizing the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers state. Burnham had in fact previously announced both his rejection of dialectical materialism and his view that the Soviet state represented not a degenerated form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but a new form of exploitative class society. In 1939-40, Shachtman and Abern did not openly reject the materialist foundations of Marxism as Burnham did. Moreover, Abern claimed to agree with Trotsky that the Soviet Union was a degenerated workers state, while Shachtman declared himself agnostic on the class nature of the Soviet state. Nonetheless, as war began in Poland and Finland, Shachtman and Abern joined Burnham in rejecting the program of unconditional military defense of the world's first workers state.

Trotsky's devastating polemics against this wholesale repudiation of the Marxist worldview were subsequently collected and published by the SWP in an aptly titled volume, *In Defense of Marxism*.[5] Burnham proved the point when he decamped from the Marxist movement shortly after the minority left the SWP to found a new organization, the Workers Party. Still ensconced at NYU, Burnham wrote *The Managerial Revolution* in 1941, which posited that a new bureaucratic ruling class was the wave of the future. During WWII, he alternately cheered on either Hitler's Germany or Stalin's Russia, depending on which seemed to be winning at the time. Burnham eventually threw in his lot with the arch-reactionaries, sympathizers of clerical fascism and just plain snobs grouped around William Buckley's *National Review*. In the 1950s, he was a surprise witness ***for the government*** at Justice Department hearings in which the Shachtmanites were attempting to get themselves removed from the Attorney General's "subversive list."

The Shachtmanite Workers Party, which claimed to be Marxist and even to support the Fourth International, went on to become an exponent of the view that the Soviet Union was a new, "bureaucratic collectivist" form of class society, although it did not lump together fascism and Stalinism. This revisionist Workers Party —not to be confused with the Trotskyist WPUS of 1934-1936—existed from 1940 to 1949, when it changed its name to the Independent Socialist League.

Under the intense pressure of U.S. imperialism's anti-Soviet Cold War beginning in 1948, Shachtman came to see Stalinism as a danger greater than "democratic" imperialism—and to view it even as a new, world-encompassing system. In 1958, Shachtman liquidated his organization into the rabidly anti-communist American social democracy, the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation. He ended his days as an open supporter of U.S. imperialism and member of the Democratic Party, backing the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and the vicious, losing imperialist war against the Vietnamese social revolution.

Shachtman had taken the first step along the road of reconciliation with U.S. imperialism in 1939. In rejecting the Trotskyist program on the Russian Question, Shachtman also rejected the Leninist methods of internal struggle which he so powerfully details in "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?" In his seminal 1940 article "Struggle for a Proletarian Party,"[6] Cannon skewered Abern, Shachtman and Burnham for their unprincipled bloc and general petty-bourgeois approach to politics, which put incidental organizational grievances and personal ego over considerations of principle. This was a method condemned by the Shachtman of 1936 but practiced by the Shachtman of 1939-40. It was in reference to this flip-flop that Cannon later quipped, "Shachtman was always distinguished not only by an extraordinary literary facility, but also by a no less extraordinary literary versatility, which enabled him to write equally well on both sides of a question. I believe in giving every man his due, and Shachtman is entitled to that compliment."[7]

Cannon was unsurpassed in his ability to explain complicated Marxist ideas in simple language. "The Struggle for a Proletarian Party," written with Cannon's spare sharpness, has a clarity lacking in Shachtman's more lengthy and verbose "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?" Yet both stand as major contributions to the arsenal of those seeking to build an international vanguard party in the Leninist tradition. Cannon's book was supplemented in 1940 by Joseph Hansen's essay "The Abern Clique," an exposé of Abern's underhanded methods—for example, selective release of restricted political material which enabled him to gain authority as the purveyor of the "real scoop."[8] Hansen had only recently broken from the clique, and he explains how this gossip mill simply fostered ill will toward the Cannon leadership and its "organizational methods" with a corresponding disparaging of program and principle.

What Hansen doesn't say, but Shachtman reveals toward the end of "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?", is that the Abern clique had its origins in the "Shachtman faction" which had counterposed itself to the "Cannon faction" in a heated factional battle in the CLA from 1931 to 1933. Shachtman's document refers not to the Abern clique but to the "Weber group" or the "Weberites" because in 1934-35 Jack Weber was the principal political spokesman for Abern's circle. Widely discredited by his role in the CLA, Abern had refused to run for the National Committee and had withdrawn from an active leading role in the party. (For details, see Appendix I.)

Thus, in 1936, Shachtman was polemicizing against those with whom he had allied in an essentially personalist fight against Cannon in 1931-33, and with whom he would ally again in 1939-40. ***The Abern clique was the Shachtmanites...without Shachtman.*** In this document, Shachtman reveals his intimate knowledge of the clique's origins and mindset, reserving special venom for his longtime friend Albert Glotzer who, after 1939, would follow Shachtman through every twist and turn of his descent to social-patriotism. In later years, Glotzer referred to Shachtman's 1936 treatise as "the dirtiest document ever put out" in the early American Trotskyist movement.[9]

It is therefore not surprising that those seeking to document the Shachtmanite tradition have sought to downplay, if not disappear, this major work by Shachtman. It does not appear at all in the massive tome of reprints of Shachtmanite articles produced in Britain by the Labourite social-patriot Sean Matgamna, who is seeking to appropriate Shachtman's mantle.[10] And this lengthy work doesn't even get a passing mention in Peter Drucker's biography of Shachtman.[11] Nor does any mention of it appear in *Trotskyism in the United States: Historical Essays and Reconsiderations*, which ostensibly stands in the tradition of Cannon.[12]

The Prometheus Research Library takes great pleasure in presenting to the radical public this document which the latter-day "historians" of Trotskyism have sought to disappear. Unlike the Stalinists, we do not disappear people from history and we do not denigrate the contributions made by renegades when they were still guided by Marxism and were active proponents of the workers' struggle against capitalism. Rather, we follow the example of Lenin, who continued to urge his followers to study the early works of Plekhanov despite his social-patriotism during World War I and his opposition to the October Revolution. In earlier years, it was Plekhanov who not only translated Marx's works into Russian but actively recruited a new generation to Marxism; one of those was Lenin. Shachtman's document was written during the period when he collaborated closely with Cannon and Trotsky, and it belongs in our tradition.

The Communist League of America

The American Trotskyist movement was born in October 1928, when Cannon and two of his key faction lieutenants, Shachtman and Abern, were expelled from the Workers (Communist) Party for Trotskyism.[13] A delegate to the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928, Cannon received a partial copy of Trotsky's criticism of the draft program of the Communist International.[14] For the first time, Cannon had before him a political analysis of the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian party and state, which had been given ideological justification in Stalin's dogma of "socialism in one country." The disastrous defeat of the Second Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 had fully revealed the anti-revolutionary implications of this new dogma.

In his introduction to Trotsky's critique, which the expelled Trotskyists soon published in pamphlet form, Cannon wrote of the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition's fight against the Chinese Communist Party's disastrous subordination to the bourgeois-nationalist Guomindang:

> The Stalin-Bukharin leadership rejected all these proposals of the Leninist Opposition in favor of the Menshevik policy of union with the liberal bourgeoisie which in actual practice gave the hegemony to the bourgeoisie, prevented the real development of the independent Communist Party and led to the defeat of the working class. The bourgeois "allies" of the proletariat became the hangmen of the revolution just as the Opposition foretold.[15]

Trotsky's critique decoded the ***programmatic and international*** roots of Cannon's manifest feeling of being at a dead end in the faction-ridden American party.[16] The CLA was founded in May 1929 by Cannon and some 100 of his former factional supporters in the Communist Party (CP), most of whom had been expelled simply for questioning the propriety of Cannon's expulsion. They were won to Trotskyism by reading the sections of Trotsky's critique which Cannon was able to smuggle out of the USSR after the Sixth Congress.

The American Trotskyists had the tremendous advantage of having functioned as part of an organized tendency in the old CP. However, like most of those won to Trotsky's International Left Opposition (ILO), they also had to unlearn the scholastic cant and administrative methods that had often substituted for Leninism in the degenerating Comintern.

They had plenty of time for study. Almost simultaneously with the Communist League of America's founding, the Communist International undertook a left turn which drastically undercut the Left Opposition's appeal to disaffected elements who had previously

been open to its criticisms of the growing opportunist practice of the Comintern. The purpose of the turn was to justify Stalin's purge of his former bloc partners Bukharin and other rightists in the Russian party, whose disastrous policies of appeasement of the kulaks (well-off peasants able to hire labor) had brought the young Soviet Union to the brink of economic disaster (as the Left Opposition had predicted). Stalin's flip-flop led to the brutal forced collectivization of agriculture and an adventurist rate of industrialization in the USSR. It was accompanied by the decreeing of a new "Third Period" of post-World War I capitalism, with socialist revolution imminent internationally. The Communist Parties declared the trade unions under reformist leadership to be hopelessly reactionary and undertook to build their own "revolutionary" unions. They declared the mass reformist social-democratic parties to be "social fascist" and refused to engage in any united-front actions with them.

The ILO identified itself as the international "Bolshevik-Leninist" current and considered itself an expelled faction of the Comintern, fighting to return the International to the program and practice that had animated it during its first four years of existence. This was a necessary orientation given that the Comintern still organized the vast majority of the most class-conscious and revolutionary-minded workers internationally. However, Stalin's left turn politically froze out the small Trotskyist propaganda groups from Communist-led mass organizations, a phenomenon which was reinforced by slander, exclusion and violence. This was the root of what Cannon later referred to as the "dog days" of the Left Opposition.[17]

It was in this context that the personal and organizational tensions congealed in the CLA, creating a polarized organization in which a grouping of younger elements, centered around Shachtman, Abern, Glotzer and the Canadian Maurice Spector, fought against those around Cannon (Arne Swabeck, Oehler and the Minneapolis National Committee members Vincent Dunne and Carl Skoglund). These two factions fought on almost every detail of the organization's work. In later years, Cannon identified the roots of the CLA's factional polarization as follows:

> As we began to get the writings of Trotsky, it opened up a whole new world for us. And they [Abern and Shachtman] discovered, that is my assumption, that while they had always taken what I said for gospel, they discovered that there were a lot of things I didn't know. That I was just beginning to learn from Trotsky. What they didn't know was that I was learning as well as they were. Shachtman at least, I think, had the idea that he had outgrown me.[18]

This polarization began to congeal in late 1931 and lasted through 1933. There were, however, no programmatic or principled differences. As Shachtman details in the final sections of "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?", Trotsky intervened with great force to prevent a split and both factions agreed to dissolve in the spring of 1933.[19] Over the course of the summer and fall of that year, the polarization gradually subsided. Shachtman's document gives a detailed account of the end of the Shachtman faction, which continued organized meetings into January 1934. By this time, Shachtman and a few of his supporters, like Morris Lewit and Sylvia Bleeker, had gone over to collaboration with Cannon. As Shachtman notes, "It is from that time that dates the birth of the Weber-Abern caucus!"

The New Party Orientation

Trotsky's intervention to end the CLA's factional polarization occurred just a few months before the ILO, on the basis of the manifest bankruptcy of the Comintern's policy in Germany, declared the CI dead as a revolutionary force. As a result, the ILO raised the call for the construction of new parties internationally. It was the new possibility for intervention and growth coming off this turn, as much as Trotsky's intervention, which laid the basis for transcending the Shachtman vs. Cannon polarization in the CLA. Shachtman collaborated with Cannon in the process of taking advantage of the new opportunities—centrally the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strikes and the fusion with the AWP—while most of his former factional supporters around Abern skulked and obstructed, stuck in the "circle spirit" of a small-group existence.

The Great Depression had thrown Germany into a crisis of a depth not seen since that provoked by the French invasion of the Ruhr in 1923. From exile since 1929, Trotsky had been warning the German proletariat of the urgent need for joint action by the Social Democratic and Communist workers to smash the ominous threat posed by the fascists.[20] But the Stalinized Comintern, still in its "left" Third Period phase, denounced the Social Democrats as "social fascists," effectively equating the reformists (and their working-class base) with the Nazis. Thus, despite its numbers and organization, the German working class was split and Hitler was allowed to come to power without any organized armed resistance. Following the appointment of Hitler as chancellor in January 1933 by the German president, General Paul von Hindenburg, the Nazis moved to destroy the organizations of the German workers, both Social Democratic and Communist, and set Germany on the course to WW II.

The victory of fascism in Germany in 1933 marked not only the imminent prospect of a second imperialist world war but the death knell of the Comintern as an

instrument for revolution. When no internal opposition was raised to the Comintern's reaffirmation of the German Communist Party's disastrous course, Trotsky argued that the Left Opposition could no longer function as an expelled faction of the Comintern—the ILO's sections had to become the embryos of new parties.[21] At the same time, Trotsky saw that because of the manifest bankruptcy of the Comintern, left currents were emerging in and from the reformist social-democratic parties. He urged an orientation to these new forces. In August 1933, a plenum of the ILO officially adopted the new course toward formation of the Fourth International, and in September the CLA enthusiastically did likewise. The ILO reconstituted itself as the International Communist League.

The first fruit of the new policy internationally was "The Declaration of Four," signed in August 1933 by the ILO and three centrist formations: the German Socialist Workers Party (S.A.P.), the Independent Socialist Party of Holland (OSP) and the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Holland (RSP). The declaration, written by Trotsky, presented an eleven-point synopsis of the German catastrophe and the failure of the Comintern to address it and called for the organization of a new (fourth) international.[22] It was presented to a conference of left Socialist and Communist organizations and was designed to be a step on the road to regroupment with leftward-moving centrist forces internationally. The formation of the Workers Party of the U.S. represented the successful application of this regroupment policy on the American terrain.

Negotiations with the American Workers Party

The turn to the new party orientation was accompanied in the United States by an upswing in the class struggle as the working class began to recover from the fear and economic uncertainty which accompanied the onset of the Great Depression. Hatred of the Republican administration of Herbert Hoover was such that Franklin D. Roosevelt rode into office in a landslide in 1932—an election which also saw a combined vote of over one million for the Communist and Socialist Party candidates. A wave of strikes hit the auto industry as 1933 began, impelling Roosevelt to sign the National Industrial Recovery Act which gave nominal legal sanction to the workers' right to organize.

In early 1934, the CLA increased publication of the party press, the *Militant*, to three times a week in preparation for an industry-wide strike in the New York City hotels. A number of CLA members had been active in the union, including B. J. Field, who had been elected union secretary. Field was an intellectual who had been expelled from the CLA in 1931 for indiscipline but was readmitted at the urging of Trotsky. As the strike progressed, Field bent to the pressure of the newly created government Labor Board and disregarded the party fraction and leadership. Field and a few of his supporters were expelled from the CLA in the midst of the battle and led the strike to defeat.[23] The Fieldites complained bitterly about the "Cannon and Shachtman leadership," the first time this amalgam was ever made in the CLA.[24]

The CLA had already initiated preparations for a new theoretical journal, the *New International*, as part of the regroupment orientation. The Trotskyists had also engaged in talks with Ben Gitlow's group, a recent split from Jay Lovestone's Right Opposition (supporters of Bukharin), though these talks went nowhere. In the midst of preparations for the hotel strike, the Trotskyists addressed an open letter to A. J. Muste's American Workers Party proposing that negotiations be opened toward fusion. Formerly called the Conference for Progressive Labor Action (CPLA), Muste's organization had declared the necessity of building a new revolutionary party at its convention in late 1933, insisting:

> The revolutionary struggle of the masses against the capitalist system which more and more depresses their standard of living, takes various forms.... The primary form is the economic struggles of the worker and farmer. The struggle is, however, inspired, coordinated, carried to its goal of taking power, by the revolutionary political party.[25]

Muste had been active in the labor movement since his involvement in the Lawrence, Massachusetts textile strike in 1919. A former pacifist and preacher in the Dutch Reformed church, he was director of the Brookwood Labor College to educate young workers organizers in the 1920s. Both Morris Lewit and Sylvia Bleeker of the CLA attended classes there.[26] Muste's supporters had been the most visible force for "progressive," but generally pro-capitalist, trade-union activism in the early years of the Depression. They were moving leftward under the hammer blows of the Depression and Hitler's rise to power, but the AWP remained a heterogeneous organization, as Cannon later recalled:

> In fact, it could be properly described as a political menagerie which had within it every type of political species. Put another way, the membership of the AWP included everything from proletarian revolutionists to reactionary scoundrels and fakers.[27]

The most well-known anti-communist social democrat in the AWP leadership was J. B. Salutsky-Hardman, editor of the journal of Sidney Hillman's Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union. Other rightist opponents of fusion included Ludwig Lore and his son Karl. A columnist for the bourgeois *New York Post*, the elder Lore was

in 1934 moving toward the open social-patriotism he later adopted.

Not only did the CLA leadership have to politically isolate or at least neutralize the AWP right wing, but they had to deal with a nascent opposition to the fusion perspective within the League itself. Hugo Oehler, a full member of the CLA National Committee, justified this opposition by arguing that the New York resident NC members, centrally Jim Cannon, Max Shachtman and Arne Swabeck, were moving too fast on negotiations with other organizations when they should have been concentrating on reorganizing and consolidating the League. By March 1934, Oehler was writing to the out-of-town NCers explaining that the New York resident committee was polarized on the question: "Jim, Max and Arne vs. Hugo. Marty [Abern] not taking a position yet."[28]

Cannon had developed a close personal relationship with Oehler in the early 1930s. They had similar roots. Oehler had taken over the Kansas City Communist Party organization when Cannon moved into the central party leadership in the early 1920s. One of the CP's best trade-union field operators, Oehler had been the organizer of District 10, which was headquartered in Kansas City and encompassed ten western states. He remained in the CP as an agent of the Trotskyists for the first year of the CLA's existence and helped lead the heroic Gastonia, North Carolina textile strike in 1929. With little formal education, Oehler acquired most of his book learning in local libraries when he was a field organizer, waiting for the men to get off work.[29] He was to reveal the obtuseness and rigidity typical of an autodidact, but as Cannon later noted, "He was not a typical sectarian...yapping on the sidelines, telling everybody what to do." Retaining a great respect for Oehler as a mass worker, Cannon recalled that their personal break was "a very agonizing separation."[30]

It was not internal opposition but the class struggle which intervened in early 1934 to put CLA-AWP negotiations on the back burner. In May, the AWP led a strike at the Toledo Auto-Lite factory, mobilizing unemployed workers in mass picket lines and facing down the National Guard in a six-day pitched battle. That same month, CLA supporters in Minneapolis led an eleven-day citywide truck drivers strike, during which the union virtually controlled the city, finally winning union recognition for the Teamsters. However, the bosses attempted to renege on the deal, forcing the Trotskyists to lead the drivers out again for 36 days in July-August. They won a definitive union victory, breaking the power of the bourgeois Citizens Alliance and its gangs of thugs in what had been a notorious open-shop town. The Minneapolis victory occurred shortly after an eleven-week strike by San Francisco longshoremen ended with a government-brokered arbitration deal that eventually led to a union victory. The San Francisco battle, which had included a two-day citywide general strike in May, was led by supporters of the Communist Party.

As it won the victory in Minneapolis, the CLA moved ahead with the regroupment orientation. In July, they published the first issue of the *New International.* In August, they concretized plans to launch a united-front defense organization, the Non-Partisan Labor Defense League, modeled on the CP's International Labor Defense under Cannon. They drew in Herbert Solow and some prominent liberals in the orbit of the AWP. In the fall, negotiations for unity between the AWP and CLA began in earnest, propelled by the victories that each organization had recently led.[31] By this time, however, the CLA was again in the midst of a serious factional battle, with Oehler leading an ultraleft opposition to Trotsky's proposed tactics toward the reformist social-democratic party in France, the SFIO (French Section of the Labor [Second] International).

The French Turn and "Organic Unity"

The victory of fascism in Germany had a tremendous impact on the working class internationally. France was rocked by social crisis when French fascists carried out an armed demonstration in February 1934, targeting the French parliament. While not a serious military attack, the demonstration had its intended effect: the Daladier regime was replaced by a "strong" cabinet led by Gaston Doumergue. Also in February, the clerical-fascist Dollfuss government in Austria moved to militarily suppress the Austrian Social Democracy. Despite a general strike and armed resistance by the Vienna workers, they were defeated by government artillery and the Social Democracy was crushed.

Under the threat of fascism, French workers and youth began to flock to the SFIO and drive it to the left. Strong pressure was building in the working class base of the SFIO and the French CP (PCF) for unity against the fascists.

In March 1934, Trotsky proclaimed the urgency of the crisis in an article, "France Is Now the Key to the Situation":

> The Second and Third Internationals have played themselves out. Now they are only obstacles on the road of the proletariat. It is necessary to build a revolutionary organization corresponding to the new historic epoch and its tasks. It is necessary to pour new wine into new bottles. It is necessary to build a genuinely revolutionary party in every country. It is necessary to build a new International.
>
> The thinking worker must recognize the iron logic of these conclusions. But doubt born of the all-too-recent

> disappointments rises in him. A new party? This means new ***splits***. But the proletariat needs ***unity*** above everything else. This is simply a pretext, largely arising from a reluctance to face great difficulties.
>
> We reply that it is not true that the proletariat is in need of unity in and of itself. It needs ***revolutionary unity in the class struggle***. In Austria almost the whole proletariat was united under the banner of the Social Democracy; but this party taught the workers capitulation, not fight.... Opportunistic "unity" has proven itself to be the road to ruin....
>
> We need genuine, revolutionary, fighting unity: for the resistance against fascism, for the defense of our right to live, for an irreconcilable struggle against bourgeois rule, for the full conquest of power, for the ***dictatorship of the proletariat, for the workers' state, for the Soviet United States of Europe, for the Socialist World Republic***.[32]

In France, where both the SFIO and the Communist Party were mass parties, there arose a proposal for "organic unity," i.e., the actual fusion of the two parties into one. The urge for unity welling up from the ranks of the PCF and SFIO represented a healthy sentiment for class unity against a rightly perceived foe. But the Communists still ostensibly stood for the organization of the proletarian vanguard into a party separate from and opposed to the reformist, pro-imperialist social democracy. The PCF still held sway over the vast majority of workers who looked to the example of the Russian Revolution. A fusion with the SFIO would have represented a repudiation of the principled split in the workers movement which Lenin had carried out in the process of forming the Third International after the betrayal of the Second International in WWI.

Yet the SFIO was moving steadily to the left, in part because it was attracting leftward-moving elements repelled by the evident bureaucratic bankruptcy of the Stalinists, a trend which was also manifesting itself internationally. In November 1933, the SFIO expelled the right-wing members of its parliamentary fraction. At its Toulouse congress in May 1934, the party voted against forming further coalition governments with the bourgeois Radical Party and invited expelled left-wingers to rejoin the party.

In June, Trotsky proposed that the Ligue Communiste de France enter the SFIO:

> The League (like other sections) was forced to develop as an isolated propaganda group. This determined both its positive sides (an honest and serious attachment to the principles) and its negative sides (observing the labor movement from the outside). In the course of the elaboration of the principles and methods of the Left Opposition, the positive sides of the League carried the day. At present, when it becomes necessary to circulate the accumulated capital, the negative sides are threatening to get the upper hand....
>
> It is necessary to go to the masses. It is necessary to find a place for oneself within the framework of the united front, i.e., within the framework of one of the two parties of which it is composed. In actual practice, that means within the framework of the SFIO.[33]

It was impossible for the Trotskyists to function as a faction of the Communist Party—Stalinist lies, persecution, disruption and slander against the Left Opposition were about to escalate into outright murder and assassination. The only practical option was to enter the SFIO.

Trotsky had earlier criticized the French Ligue for not polemicizing sufficiently against the SFIO leadership. He now argued:

> To exist as an independent organization and thereby not to demarcate oneself sharply from the Social Democrats means to risk becoming an appendage of Social Democracy. To enter openly (***under the given concrete conditions***) the Social Democratic party in order to develop an inexorable struggle against the reformist leadership means to perform a revolutionary act.[34]

The entry tactic known as the French turn was also applied in Belgium and a number of other countries from 1934 to 1936. The disastrous consequences of ***not*** employing Trotsky's tactic were revealed in Spain. Preferring unity with the evolving reformists of the Spanish Right Opposition, the Bolshevik-Leninists in Spain, led by Andrés Nin, ignored the radicalizing Socialist Party despite Trotsky's intense argumentation. This left the field open to the Stalinists, who captured the whole of the SP youth group in 1935, a key accretion of forces which helped give them the basis to betray the Spanish Revolution of 1936-37.

Opposition to the tactic in the French Ligue came from two quarters. A group around René Lhuillier opposed the turn in principle, arguing that it represented a liquidation of the vanguard party as propounded by Lenin; a small group around Pierre Naville also opposed the turn. In the German section of the International Communist League, the opposition was led by E. Bauer. What all these currents ignored, as Trotsky wrote, was that "the League is not yet a party. It is an embryo, and an embryo needs covering and nourishment in order to develop."[35] That Lhuillier and Bauer's "principled" opposition was simply the flip side of an opportunist desire to accommodate to social democracy became apparent within a year or two: Lhuillier's group entered the SFIO and remained, even after the core of the Trotskyists were expelled, while Bauer's abandoned the ICL for the centrist S.A.P.

While he continued to claim solidarity with the ICL, Oehler organized his opposition inside the CLA in solidarity with Lhuillier and Bauer. A representative of the

Bauer group, Paul Kirchhoff (referred to here by his party name Eiffel), came to the United States to assist Oehler in organizing opposition to the Cannon-Shachtman leadership. Oehler and Eiffel won over Louis Basky, a founding CLA member and former leader of the CP's Hungarian-language federation, and Tom Stamm, a young CLA cadre. Both Basky and Stamm had been supporters of the Cannon faction in the 1931-33 CLA faction fight.

The fight against Oehler's ultraleftism was greatly complicated by the fact that the Weber-Abern group seized on the issue of "organic unity" to organize a third factional grouping. Though they supported the majority line on the French turn, Weber, Abern and Glotzer revealed their underlying opportunism by insisting that the ICL should also support the slogan of "organic unity," which meant, in essence, a return to the Kautskyan conception of the "party of the whole class." Cannon and Shachtman vehemently opposed the position of the Weberites, as well as that of Oehler, and won a slim majority of the CLA National Committee. Cannon was sent as the CLA delegate to an ICL plenum held in October 1934 to decide the issue. The NC issued the following instructions to Cannon:

> 1. To endorse the action taken by the French League in entering in bloc as an independent faction into the SFIO.
>
> 2. To recognize the Bolshevik-Leninist faction of the SFIO as the French section of the L.I.C. [ICL]—and no other. To urge that the dissident comrades of the minority shall subordinate themselves to this section. To declare that any arrangement of forces that the International Plenum may deem necessary for the French section (possible group outside of the SFIO, or fraction inside the CP, etc.) shall be conducted under the auspices and the direction of the above-mentioned French section of the L.I.C.
>
> 3. To oppose the standpoint that "organic unity" as such is a "progressive step," and that the Bolshevik-Leninists shall become the proponents of such a slogan. That in all conditions and with all developments that may take place in the ranks of the working class or in the bureaucracy of the two principal parties, the Bolshevik-Leninists shall, under all circumstances, point out the illusory and reactionary character of "organic unity" as such (even under present "French conditions") and to emphasize instead Unity on a Revolutionary program in a Revolutionary Party.[36]

The NC majority was certainly correct in its political thrust, but it should be noted that the practice of issuing such binding instructions is antithetical to Leninist decision-making, which requires discussion and deliberation in the highest party bodies, with delegates free to change their minds on the basis of the discussion. The international plenum approved the French turn. While Cannon arrived in Paris too late to take part in its proceedings, he was able to spend several days talking with Trotsky, who had taken refuge in southern France.

Fusion with the AWP

While Cannon was in France, Shachtman and Muste came to agreement on a Declaration of Principles for the proposed new party, defeating the AWP right wing and Stalinist-influenced elements like Louis Budenz who were attempting to prevent fusion. (Budenz was later to turn up as the editor of the *Daily Worker*.) Within the CLA, Oehler strongly opposed the draft Declaration. It was only after Cannon returned and renegotiated certain sections with Muste that Oehler and his supporters finally agreed to accept it as the basis for unity. Cannon thought Oehler had made far too much of an issue out of political imprecisions in the first draft. In outline notes for a speech on the subject, he wrote of Oehler, "He seized the faults of the first draft to sow panic and break. I saw it as a basis ***on main points of difference*** to force thru fusion on clear program."[37] In additional speech notes Cannon wrote:

> Don't mean to question Oehlerites loyalty or to exclude or expel them but interests of our movement, the Int. and of the New Party demand their political defeat.[38]

The political confusion of the CLA's Third National Convention, held in late November 1934, is described in detail in Shachtman's "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?"[39] With three major factional groupings contending, none of the initial motions on fusion with the AWP was adopted. Cannon finally got a majority when he submitted a bare-bones motion that supported fusion while avoiding every other disputed question. The elections for the new National Committee (which was to become one-half of the fused party's NC according to the fifty-fifty arrangement Cannon and Muste had worked out) resulted in a particularly messy all-night session. The CLAers went straight from this session into the fusion convention on 1-2 December 1934.

All of the CLA's organized groupings agreed to dissolve and not take the fight into the WPUS. But the personal/political divisions went deep. In the face of these, the speech notes Cannon wrote for the convention banquet sound almost like a cry of defiance:

> De Morticus nil nisi Bonum. In a sense we die—But also rebirth. We endured. We survived. Our opportunity has come. Our hour has struck. We are ready—prepared. The memory of 6 yrs is dear to us. Proud of them. Rich & fruitful time of preparation. LD: "Steeled." Regret nothing & repent nothing. Go forward—& take our banner with us.[40]

One of the programmatic compromises agreed to by the CLA deserves special note—the WPUS was not to

be an official section of Trotsky's International Communist League:

> The Party, at its launching, is affiliated with no other group, party, or organization in the United States or elsewhere. Its National Committee is empowered to enter into fraternal relations with groups and parties in other countries, and, if they stand on the same fundamental program as its own, to cooperate with them in the elaboration of a complete world program and the speediest possible establishment of the new revolutionary International. Action on any organizational affiliation must be submitted to a National Convention of the Party.[41]

This principled compromise correctly made the party's participation in the preparations for the launching of the Fourth International a programmatic question. Oehler, who accused Trotsky's ICL of unprincipled "liquidationism," was more than happy to agree to the provision not to immediately affiliate. Oehler and his faction entered the WPUS determined to ***obstruct*** the party's affiliation with the international Trotskyist movement.

"Organic Unity": A Non-Issue

Soon after fusion, the wind was taken out of Glotzer, Weber and Abern's sails when Trotsky wrote opposing the French Ligue's raising the slogan of "organic unity":

> I already considered it wrong to raise the demand for organic unity in the abstract because the entire leadership of the SFIO defended this demand as their main demand every day. Under these circumstances and since, on the other hand, the demand itself met with a quite confused but very sympathetic and sincere reception among the masses, it would obviously be wrong to come out ***against*** this demand. But it was entirely sufficient to say to the masses: unity is very good, but we must immediately try to make it understood: Unity for ***what***? We must use the discussion about organic unity to make propaganda for our program.[42]

In May 1935, soon after Trotsky wrote his letter, Stalin signed a non-aggression pact with France—the Stalin-Laval pact—in which Stalin accepted the "national defense" of France against Germany. This heralded the abandonment of the Third Period in favor of the popular front. Under the guise of fighting fascism, the Stalinists advocated unity of the workers movement with the "progressive" and "democratic" elements of the ***bourgeoisie***, i.e., those elements who were already in diplomatic alliance with the USSR and those with whom Stalin sought to make an alliance. This repudiation of the political independence of the working class was made explicit at the Comintern's Seventh, and final, Congress, held in July-August 1935 and dubbed by Trotsky the "Liquidation Congress."[43]

From this point on—except for a brief episode of ersatz Leninism during the Hitler-Stalin pact—the Communist Parties internationally gave up all but the barest pretense of standing on Lenin's 1914 irreconcilable break with reformism and social patriotism. There were, however, substantial impediments to the unity of Stalinism and social democracy. When he was still a revolutionary Marxist, James Burnham explained:

> Though there is now a temporary political coincidence in essential matters between the social democracy and Stalinism, the crucial fact remains that social democracy and Stalinism reach this position from different directions. Social democracy and Stalinism have been and remain ***the expression of different class forces and interests.*** The social democratic bureaucracy, in a crisis (war, insurrection), functions as the agent of finance capital within the ranks of the working class. The Stalinist bureaucracy, on the other hand, functions as the agent of the corrupt, parasitic and reactionary ruling strata of the Soviet Union—that is, of the ***workers' state***—within the ranks of the working class. For the moment, the interests of the two bureaucracies coincide, but because of the differing social roots, there can be no guarantee in advance that they will continue indefinitely in the future to coincide.
>
> Stalinism must attempt to keep a free hand, to be in a position to make another sudden and sharp turn. For example, if the Franco-Soviet Pact should be repudiated, and a *rapprochement* between France and Germany take place, the entire Stalinist policy in France, and the war position of the CI as a whole would have to be profoundly altered. This would spike organic unity developments, since Blum and his companions of the SFIO leadership would in that event, though changing phrases, no doubt still remain basically devoted to the bourgeois fatherland.[44]

The degeneration of the Stalinists into outright social democrats did not occur until the advent of Eurocommunism in the 1970s. First in Spain and Italy and then in France, the major West European CPs broke their ties to Moscow as a signal of their fealty to the capitalist order. This was their admission ticket to the popular-front governments which have ruled these countries for the past decade or more. This process presaged the collapse of the ossified and discredited Stalinist bureaucracies in 1989-92 in the East European deformed workers states and the Soviet Union which culminated in capitalist counterrevolution.[45]

In any case, "organic unity" had always been essentially a red herring in the CLA, a pretext for the Weber-Abern clique to claim a political basis for existence. They soon found other pretexts, filling Muste's ears with their objections to Cannon's "organizational methods," obstructing and muddying the fight against Oehler, as Shachtman lays out in his document.

The American Socialist Party

Even before the fusion with the AWP, the CLA leadership had been probing the emerging left wing within the American SP. The SP had begun to fracture

after the death of longtime leader Morris Hillquit in October 1933. Lovestone's Right Opposition was also assiduously following these developments, as was the Stalinist Communist Party. In a memorandum Shachtman submitted to the CLA resident committee in May 1934, he described the divisions in the SP as follows:

> 1. The group with the greatest number of delegates, the "Militants." Its second program, just issued, is a typically centrist program, and not of the best type. Its victory is best calculated to save reformist right-wing socialism in the United States. It avowedly strives for a second (and consequently more miserable) edition of the 2½ International of Vienna. Juggling with a few Marxian phrases, its objective role (and in some cases, at least, without any doubt, its subjective intention) is to prevent the movement of the left-wing workers in the SP toward communism.
>
> 2. The group with the smallest number of delegates, the Revolutionary Policy Committee [RPC]. Here is a centrist group of different kidney. It represents more clearly than any other current in the SP in the last dozen years the honest groping of revolutionary workers toward communism. Its program, unsatisfactorily brief (far terser than that of the Militants, and even inferior to it in certain secondary points) is closest to the communist program. It carries a good deal of Lovestone's ideological baggage, but the latter is so light that an active, fermenting group, fraternally assisted by us, can throw off most if not all of it without too much difficulty.
>
> 3. The right-wing bureaucracy, probably carrying in tow on all decisive questions such honest fools as Norman Thomas and other professional confusionists. It appears that it will be, numerically, a minority, although it controls and will continue to control all the "heavy" and "opulent" institutions of official socialism in the country (*Forward*, Rand School, trade-union apparatuses and sinecures, etc., etc.).[46]

Shachtman advocated that the CLA attempt to form its own faction in the SP to fight for the Trotskyist program, seeking to win members of the RPC in particular away from the policy of conciliating the Militants. At the June 1934 SP convention, Thomas blocked with the Militants and they won the majority; the RPC collapsed. Cannon, who had been sent as an observer to the convention, advocated that the CLA regroup the leftist remnants of the RPC into a new national faction.[47] Over the next few months, as it moved toward fusion with the AWP, the CLA evidently also had some modest success with perspectives in the SP. SPers who were won to the CLA's program were counseled to stay in the SP and fight. Chicago lawyer Albert Goldman, who had been won to the CLA from the Communist Party in early 1933 over Germany, refused to fuse with the AWP and announced he would enter the SP instead. He was expelled from the CLA, but the journal he founded in the SP, *Socialist Appeal*, would later prove very useful to the Trotskyists during their entry.

The Fight in the WPUS

In the months following the 1934 fusion, Cannon and Shachtman were busy isolating and defeating former AWP right-wingers like Budenz, who—on his way into the Communist Party—argued that the WPUS should present "socialism" as an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. But Oehler, believing that Cannon and Shachtman's real aim was to enter the SP, aimed his fire against the French turn. Entry into the American SP was an unrealistic perspective as long as the rightist SP "Old Guard" controlled the organization in New York, where the majority of WPUS members lived. But Cannon rightly argued that the WP had to pay attention to developments in the SP:

> There is no reasonable ground that I can see for the assertion that our road leads through the Socialist Party, but I do believe most decidedly that the development of our movement into a mass party leads through a fusion of our party with the eventually developed left wing in the SP. We have a tremendous advantage over the revolutionary groups in Europe in the fact that we have a fairly secure independent position, a strong press and seasoned cadres. This ought to put us in a position to make terms with the left Socialists who eventually come to the point of a revolutionary position; but we will never get to this point if we do not have a correct and realistic tactic toward the SP. One of the really big and in my opinion irreconcilable issues between us and the Oehler-Zack combination is indeed over this question of the estimation of the SP and CP. We have a dozen instances in the past weeks from the positions they have taken to show that if they make a distinction between the CP and SP it is in favor of the former.[48]

Oehler began to campaign against the ICL's "capitulation" to the social democracy, also charging that Trotsky wielded far too much authority in the international organization. He won a small following for his views, centered in the New York local and youth group. In a report to the International Secretariat, Cannon, Swabeck and Shachtman complained that the Oehlerites

> advanced the charge that we are scheming to take the WP into the American Socialist Party. To this were added outrageous slanders to the effect that Cannon and Shachtman were already collaborating secretly with SP right wing and "Militant" leaders. Such contacts as we had in the SP were poisoned by this slander campaign, militating against our efforts to influence the leftward movements.[49]

The documents we reprint in this bulletin describe the WPUS discussion in detail, so we give only a brief overview here. Oehler and his supporters brought the fight into the open at the new party's first national gathering, an Active Workers Conference held in Pittsburgh in

March 1935. Cannon later described this event as a "factional shambles such as I have never seen before in such a setting."[50] Nonetheless, at an NC plenum which convened in Pittsburgh at the same time, Muste and most of the former AWPers voted to condemn Oehler's views and to collaborate with the ICL and the Dutch RSAP (Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party) of Henricus Sneevliet in preparations for a founding conference of the Fourth International.[51]

After the Pittsburgh meetings, Cannon and Shachtman moved to politically defeat the Oehlerites and stop them from paralyzing the party's activity. They took aim at Joseph Zack, who had joined forces with Oehler soon after coming over to the WPUS from the Communist Party. Zack, who retained a good dose of Third Period dual unionism, was expelled for publicly asserting views which were not those of the WPUS.

An NC plenum was called for June, and Cannon and Shachtman geared up for an all-out fight. But Muste, his ears filled with Weber-Abern poison against Cannon's "organizational methods," balked. The political basis for Muste's virtual bloc with Oehler and the Weber-Abern clique at this time was later explained by Cannon:

> By the time of the June Plenum Muste had become more and more suspicious that we might possibly have some ideas about the Socialist Party that would infringe upon the integrity of the Workers Party as an organization. He was dead set against that, and he entered into a virtual, though informal, bloc with the Oehlerites.[52]

The plenum only narrowly carried (by a vote of eight to seven) a resolution by Cannon and Shachtman calling on the WP to sign the "Open Letter for the Fourth International."[53] This document, following on the earlier "Declaration of Four," was cosigned by the ICL and RSAP as well as the Workers Party. It established a Provisional Contact Committee to issue an internal bulletin and make preparations for an international Trotskyist conference. Muste advocated that the German S.A.P. also be approached to sign the Open Letter but his motion failed five to ten.[54] Muste's proposal represented a step backward from the political and programmatic clarification that had been achieved since the signing of "The Declaration of Four."

At the June Plenum, the Cannon-Shachtman leadership was in a minority on most other issues: Muste's bloc with Oehler, bolstered by the Abern-Weber clique, carried the day. The plenum voted to open a party discussion on international relations and on the party's attitude toward the CP and SP. This was a fluid situation, and for many of the former AWP members it was their first experience of factional political struggle. One such was Ted Grant, a worker from Ohio who came from the AWP into the Workers Party. His recollection of the June Plenum showed what a powerful impact Cannon had:

> When the plenum finally returned to the agenda I could see Jim with sleeves rolled up, a carton of milk for his ulcer in front of him, his face icy calm as he concentrated on his notes. He looked like a fighter waiting for the bell. When he rose to speak an unusual thing happened—the hubbub subsided and the stormy hall became silent. We fully expected him to shout brutal insults, loud denunciations, etc., but to our complete surprise Jim spoke quietly, calmly, and convincingly in language that any ordinary worker could understand. He began with a rich, all-sided examination of the rapid changes that were taking place in the SP, painstakingly explaining why it was important for us to give our major attention to its emerging left wing. Because the SP was much larger than we were, the ferment in its ranks was attracting and recruiting worker activists and rebel youth while the WP was stymied. There wasn't much time to take advantage of this opportunity because the Stalinists and Lovestoneites were ready to move in and grab off these militants. He reminded us that the WP was not yet a party, simply the propaganda nucleus with which we could build a mass workers' party. He spelled out the methods we would use, e.g., more articles about them in our press, personal contacts, establishment of Trotskyist fractions. Exactly how we would unify our forces organizationally with their best elements would have to await further developments. Finally, he said, this question will not be settled here; we will launch a full-scale democratic discussion of the political differences with the aim of educating the whole party. Then the rank and file of the party will make the final decision at a convention—that's the Marxist method.
>
> This Bolshevik method of a free, democratic, organized factional struggle to settle serious differences over program and policy was brand new to us....
>
> Jim's speeches gave us our first lesson in the ABCs of principled Marxist politics as he fairly but mercilessly dissected the political position of each group in our bloc. We noticed at once that Jim didn't stoop to petty debater's points or misrepresent an opponent's position. He stated each position fully and fairly and answered them squarely in such a way as to obtain the maximum educational value for the membership. Oehler, the die-hard sectarian, was opposed in principle to turning our attention to the SP now or ever. We had seen how disruptive the Oehlerites were at the Pittsburgh Active Workers Conference in March. Their arguments were completely sterile and unrealistic. Muste was opposed on the grounds that we should be exerting all our efforts to recruit to the WP, a policy that could lead us into stagnation and decay. Abern, the perennial cliquist who substituted personal relations for party discipline, had no interest in political questions, only used them to serve his organizational ends.
>
> Jim's critical analysis was a revelation. For the first time it became apparent to us that each member of our bloc had different principles and motives for joining the bloc. Jim put the right name on it—an unprincipled bloc. He

> stressed that rigid ultra-leftism and organizational fetishism could seriously restrict the party's freedom to make the tactical moves necessary to consolidate all potentially revolutionary militants on a Marxist program, and build a workers' combat party. We could easily understand this last point because we were leading mass organizations and were going through similar experiences in the field; in fact, this point illuminated the very essence of the different positions at the plenum.[55]

Shachtman's document expresses the political clarity that was won in the course of battle under Cannon's leadership.

The practice in the CLA and WPUS of maintaining "discipline" of higher party bodies against the membership—forbidding members of these bodies to report disputes within leading committees to the membership as a whole for debate—has nothing in common with the Leninist conception of party leadership. While it is generally advisable to debate questions in the leading bodies first to gain as much clarity as possible for further party discussion, it is the right and duty of a Leninist party leader to attempt to mobilize the membership behind his position and, in the case of matters of principle or programmatic questions, to build a faction. In fact, "committee discipline" was honored only in the breach in the WPUS.

After four months of internal discussion, the bloc between Muste and Oehler was shattered. At the October 1935 Plenum, the Oehlerites' position was rejected and they were given stern warnings to cease any further violations of party discipline. They ignored these and shortly after were expelled from the party.[56] This meant that the WPUS was ready to move quickly to take advantage of the situation when the rightist Old Guard finally split from the SP in December 1935 to found the Social Democratic Federation. At the March 1936 WPUS convention held the month after "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?" was published, the Cannon-Shachtman leadership finally obtained a decisive mandate in favor of the policy of the French turn as applied to the Socialist Party in the U.S.

The entry into the SP is outside the scope of this bulletin. We note that in the course of their year-and-a-half entry, the American Trotskyists more than doubled their membership. When the Socialist Workers Party was founded in January 1938, it had some 1,500 members. The new party had acquired the majority of the SP youth and valuable accretions of trade unionists in the maritime industry. Cannon later noted with some satisfaction that the entry dealt a death blow to the SP:

> Since then the SP has progressively disintegrated until it has virtually lost any semblance of influence in any party of the labor movement.... Comrade Trotsky remarked about that later, when we were talking with him about the total result of our entry into the Socialist Party and the pitiful state of the organization afterward. He said that alone would have justified the entry into the organization even if we hadn't gained a single member.[57]

Shachtman on His Way to Renegacy

When Shachtman rejoined the Abern cliquists in 1939-40, his authorship of "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?" caused him no small embarrassment. In response to repeated taunts about this polemic against Abern's tendency to put organizational grievances against Cannon above all questions of program and principle, Shachtman was finally forced to reply:

> I have no intention of evading the famous "Abern question." I have had in the past many sharp disputes with the old Weber-Abern group in general, and with Comrade Abern in particular. Indeed, I once wrote a very harsh and bitter polemical document against that group which Cannon flatteringly calls a "Marxist classic." If a historical study-circle were to be formed tomorrow to consider that period in our party history, there is much in that document I would repeat, much I would moderate, and much I would discard.[58]

Shachtman's later disdain notwithstanding, "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?" stands up very well in the harsh light of historical hindsight and other available documentation from the period. We agree with Cannon: it's a Marxist classic.

Prometheus Research Library
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Notes

1. *Workers Party Internal Bulletin* No. 3, Sections 1 and 2 (February 1936).
2. James P. Cannon, *The History of American Trotskyism* (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1944 [Pathfinder Press, 1972]), 169-233. Hereafter referred to as *History*.
3. Reprinted from the original mimeographed version in the collection of the Prometheus Research Library. The resolution was also published in *James P. Cannon Writings and Speeches: The Communist League of America 1932-34* (New York: Monad Press, 1985), 374-379.
4. "Letter Written by Cannon to International Secretariat," 15 August 1935 and "Letter by Glotzer to International Secretariat," 20 November 1935, both from *International Information Bulletin* No. 3, published by the National Committee of the Workers Party U.S., 12 February 1936.
5. Leon Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism* (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1942 [Pathfinder Press, 1973]). In January 1939, Burnham and Shachtman had co-authored "Intellectuals in Retreat," an article which was published in the SWP's theoretical magazine, *New International*, which they jointly edited. Shachtman here announced that Burnham's rejection of dialectical materialism had no bearing on his concrete politics. Trotsky called this assertion "the greatest blow that you, personally, as the editor of *New International*, could have delivered to Marxist theory" (*In Defense of Marxism*, 46).
6. James P. Cannon, "The Struggle for a Proletarian Party," 1 April 1940, originally appeared in SWP *Internal Bulletin* Vol. II, No. 3, April 1940. It was reprinted along with correspondence and other documents of the 1939-40 faction fight in *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1943 [Pathfinder Press, 1972]).
7. Cannon, *History*, 214.
8. Joseph Hansen, "The Abern Clique," originally mimeographed and circulated internally in the SWP, 1940. It was reprinted by the SWP in an *Education for Socialists* bulletin, September 1972.
9. Albert Glotzer, interview with PRL, 2 April 1997.
10. Sean Matgamna, ed., *The Fate of the Russian Revolution: Lost Texts of Critical Marxism, Volume 1* (London: Phoenix Press, 1998). For a critique of Shachtman's theory of bureaucratic collectivism see "The Bankruptcy of 'New Class' Theories; Tony Cliff and Max Shachtman: Pro-Imperialist Accomplices of Counterrevolution," *Spartacist* (English-language edition) No. 55, Autumn 1999.
11. Peter Drucker, *Max Shachtman and His Left: A Socialist's Odyssey Through the "American Century"* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1994). Drucker does not mention the fight against Oehler either.
12. George Breitman, Paul Le Blanc and Alan Wald, *Trotskyism in the United States: Historical Essays and Reconsiderations* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996). Breitman's essay was published posthumously.
13. The Workers Party was the name adopted by the American Communist movement when it moved to unify and legalize its status in December 1921. The name was modified to Workers (Communist) Party in 1925 and finally changed to Communist Party in 1929. The Workers Party of the 1920s is not to be confused with either the Workers Party of the U.S. of 1934-36 or the revisionist Shachtmanite organization of the 1940s. To avoid confusion, we will refer to the Workers Party of 1921-29 as the Communist Party (CP).
14. The work is today better known under the title *The Third International After Lenin* (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1936 [Pathfinder Press, 1970]).
15. James P. Cannon, 3 January 1929, introduction to *The Draft Program of the Communist International*, published as a *Militant* pamphlet. Unfortunately, Cannon's introduction does not appear in *James P. Cannon Writings and Speeches: The Left Opposition in the U.S. 1928-31* (New York: Monad Press, 1981). It was included as an appendix to the 1936 edition of *The Third International After Lenin*, though it is not listed in the table of contents. The 1929 pamphlet contained the first and third sections of Trotsky's critique of the Sixth Congress program, the portions of the document which Cannon obtained when he attended the Congress in 1928. The second section, "Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch," was published in 1930 as a pamphlet under the title *The Strategy of the World Revolution*.
16. For the record of the Cannon faction in the early Communist Party see *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism: Selected Writings and Speeches 1920-1928* (New York: Prometheus Research Library, 1992).
17. Cannon, *History*, 80-100.
18. James P. Cannon, unpublished interview with Harry Ring, 13 February 1974, 16.
19. In "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?" Shachtman, evidently misreading the dates on some personal correspondence, wrongly dated Trotsky's intervention as Spring 1934. All the letters he quotes were written in 1933, and we have corrected the dates here.

    The PRL has collected copies of the available documentation of the fight, including *Internal Bulletins*, mimeographed documents, personal correspondence and minutes. Cannon's major writings on the subject appear in *James P. Cannon Writings and Speeches: The Communist League of America 1932-34*, op. cit. Trotsky's letters are published for the most part in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, Supplement 1929-33* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979).
20. Trotsky's major articles concerning Germany in the early 1930s appear in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971). Many of the articles in this collection were serialized in the CLA's paper, the *Militant*, in 1931-33. In addition, the CLA published several as separate pamphlets: "The Turn in the Communist International and the German Situation"(1930), "Germany—The Key to the International Situation" (1931) and "The Only Road for Germany" (1932).

21. Leon Trotsky, "It Is Impossible to Remain in the Same 'International' with Stalin, Manuilsky, Lozovsky and Company," 20 July 1933, *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1933-34* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), 17-24 and "For New Communist Parties and the New International," 27 July 1933, ibid., 26-27.
22. Leon Trotsky, "The Declaration of Four; On the Necessity and Principles of a New International," 26 August 1933, ibid., 49-52.
23. Cannon, *History*, 126-135.
24. B. J. Field, A. Caldis, J. Carr, D. Levet, A. Russell, P. Myers, E. Field, "The Lessons of the New York Hotel Strike," n.d. [March 1934]. In the collection of the PRL.
25. Quoted in "An Open Letter to the American Workers Party," *Militant*, 27 January 1934.
26. Morris Lewit, interview with PRL, 21 April 1993.
27. Cannon, *History*, 171.
28. Hugo Oehler, letter to John Edwards, 5 March 1934, published in *International News*, Special Number 039, n.d., published by the Left Wing Group in the Workers Party U.S.A., from the Revolutionary Workers Collection, Tamiment Institute Library, New York University.
29. Hugo Oehler, interview with PRL, 7 June 1977.
30. James P. Cannon, unpublished interview with Harry Ring, 8 March 1974.
31. Cannon, *History*, 221. Cannon notes that the idea of speeding up the fusion negotiations was hatched while he was in Minneapolis.
32. Leon Trotsky, "France Is Now the Key to the Situation: A Call for Action and Regroupment After the French and Austrian Events," March 1934, *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1933-34*, op. cit., 240-241.
33. Leon Trotsky, "The League Faced with a Turn," June 1934, *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1934-35* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), 33-36.
34. Leon Trotsky, "The League Faced with a Decisive Turn," June 1934, ibid., 43-44.
35. Leon Trotsky, "The League Faced with a Turn," op. cit., 38.
36. "Statement by National Committee," CLA *Internal Bulletin*, No. 17, October 1934, 24. Oehler opposed the entire resolution, and Abern, Glotzer and Spector opposed the section on "organic unity." Weber was not a member of the CLA National Committee.
37. James P. Cannon, "Oehler's Theory of Pressure," speech notes, 1934, James P. Cannon and Rose Karsner Papers 1919-1974, Archives Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin (hereafter referred to as the Cannon Papers) Box 28, Folder 4.
38. James P. Cannon, "Where Does Oehler's Position Lead?", Cannon Papers, Box 28, Folder 4.
39. Partial draft minutes of the Third National Convention of the CLA confirm Shachtman's account. These typed minutes with handwritten annotations are in the collection of the PRL.
40. James P. Cannon, notes for speech at CLA convention, Cannon Papers, Box 28, Folder 4.
41. *Declaration of Principles and Constitution of the Workers Party of the U.S.*, Workers Party pamphlet, n.d. [1935].
42. Leon Trotsky, letter to Glotzer and Weber, 2 March 1935, Albert Glotzer Papers in the Archives of the Hoover Institution of War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University, Box 3. Translation from the German by the PRL.
43. Leon Trotsky, "The Comintern's Liquidation Congress," 23 August 1935, *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1935-36* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 84-94.
44. John West [James Burnham], "The Question of Organic Unity," *New International*, February 1936, 21.
45. See especially: Joseph Seymour, "On the Collapse of Stalinist Rule in East Europe," and Albert St. John, "For Marxist Clarity and a Forward Perspective," *Spartacist* (English-language edition), No. 45-46, Winter 1990-91 and *How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled*, Spartacist Pamphlet, August 1993.
46. Minutes of CLA National Committee, 29 May 1934.
47. Minutes of CLA National Committee, 25 June 1934.
48. From "Excerpts from J. Cannon's letter to Muste," 22 May 1935, Exile Papers of Lev Trotskii, the Houghton Library, Harvard University (hereafter referred to as the Trotsky Exile Papers), 13906.
49. Cannon, Shachtman, Swabeck, "Report to the International Secretariat," undated but from internal evidence written in late June or early July 1935, Trotsky Exile Papers, 15907.
50. Cannon, *History*, 201.
51. The Dutch OSP, which signed "The Declaration of Four," merged with Sneevliet's RSAP in 1935. The other signatory, the German S.A.P., had since moved to the right, dropping the demand for a new international altogether.
52. Cannon, *History*, 210.
53. Leon Trotsky, "Open Letter for the Fourth International; To All Revolutionary Working Class Organizations and Groups," Spring 1935, *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1935-36*, op. cit., 19-28.
54. Minutes of the June WPUS National Committee Plenum, as well as of the subsequent October Plenum, were approved and mimeographed. Copies exist in the PRL.
55. Ted Grant essay in *James P. Cannon As We Knew Him* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1976), 93-98.
56. A few later rejoined the Trotskyists; see Max Shachtman, "Footnote for Historians," *New International*, December 1938, 377-379.
57. Cannon, *History*, 252.
58. Max Shachtman, "The Crisis in the American Party; An Open Letter in Reply to Comrade Leon Trotsky," Socialist Workers Party *Internal Bulletin*, Vol. II, No. 7, January 1940, 18.

W P INTERNAL BULLETIN

ISSUED BY N.C. OF THE W.P.U.S.
(FOR MEMBERS ONLY)

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Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?

Internal Problems of the Workers Party

by Max Shachtman

Introduction

The national tour of all the important party branches which I completed several weeks ago brought me face to face with a number of questions and problems which arose in the course of discussion with numerous comrades. These discussions firmly convinced me of the urgent necessity of putting before the entire membership of the party and the Spartacus Youth League a detailed record of what has happened in the year of the party's existence. The ignorance of the party situation which the Oehler and the Abern-Weber groups have vied with each other to preserve in the party's ranks, and the systematic confusion and direct falsifications which they have, each in its own way, disseminated from coast to coast, demand that such a record be set down in writing for the information of the membership. The present document, however, pursues no mere informational ends; it is not intended to substitute for a history, properly speaking, of our movement. It does aim to extract from the record of the party's history some of the essential and highly illuminating political lessons which our present situation dictates must be drawn if we are to progress along revolutionary lines.

To draw together what seems to be loose ends; to place men and things in their proper place so that an otherwise incomprehensible jumble begins to take on the appearance of a coherent and significant picture; to draw up a balance sheet of ideas, proposals, events, progress, retreats, at every stage of the development of the movement; to compare what was predicted with what finally took place, what was adopted with what results it yielded, what was proposed with what the situation showed was required; to trace a complicated situation back to its causes; to test and check men and groups and ideas on the touchstone of practice—these are elementary obligations of every revolutionist. But these obligations cannot be properly discharged without a simple working knowledge of the facts. Lies, rumor and gossip are as misleading a factor in casting up a political balance sheet as forged checks would be in casting up a bank balance. And what a mass of political forged checks are afloat in our party! One has only to go through the country and discuss our political problems with an average group of comrades to be overwhelmed by the realization that a prerequisite for the further progress of our movement is the clear establishment of those facts of party history which are necessary for that balance sheet, that accounting, that report of stewardship which the membership has the right and duty to demand of the leaders at the coming national convention.

"A revolutionary organization," wrote Trotsky on February 17, 1931, in his comments on the crisis in the German Left Opposition, "selects and educates men not for corridor intrigues but for great battles. This puts very severe obligations upon the cadres, above all on the 'leaders' or those who lay claim to the role of leaders. The moments of crisis in every organization, however painful they may be, have this positive significance, that they reveal the true political physiognomy of men: what is hidden in the soul of each of them, in the name of what he is fighting, if he is capable of resistance, etc."

Our party is at present in a crisis. It can emerge from it healthier and stronger than ever only if the nature and cause of the crisis is understood. The politically primitive mind, shallow or entirely empty, or the philistine dilettante who dabbles in revolutionary politics on Monday and retires with a discouraged sigh on Tuesday, can see only the fact that "the leaders are squabbling again." Truax, for example, a former member of our National Committee, who represents the first type referred to, resigns from the party because, he writes, there is "too much factionalism" in it. In the big political disputes agitating the party, all he can see is "factionalism."

This document is not addressed to dilettantes, dabblers and blatherskites. It is meant for the serious revolutionists in the party, both "advanced" and "backward." It is meant above all to address the militant, knowledge-hungry youth of our movement. In a sense it is dedicated to them. In the strictest meaning of the word, they are the hope of tomorrow. The devastation of the Stalinist and social-democratic parties has virtually wiped out the bulk of the war and post-war generation. Just as the communist movement was built, between 1914 and 1919, primarily on the young generation, so the movement for the Fourth International must draw most of its troops from the young generation of today, those not yet corrupted by the virus of political decay.

But precisely because of that, the youth must be trained in the spirit of revolutionary Marxism, of principled politics. Through its bloodstream must run a powerful resistance to the poison of clique politics, of

subjectivism, of personal combinationism, of intrigue, of gossip. It must learn to cut through all superficialities and reach down to the essence of every problem. It must learn to think politically, to be guided exclusively by political considerations, to argue out problems with themselves and with others on the basis of principles and to act always from motives of principle. And in order to think and act correctly, the youth (the adults as well!) must always have the facts before them; and if they do not have them, they must demand them.

This document, therefore, pursues a purely political aim. If the reader grows impatient at this or that point with the multitude of details, he will have to bear in mind that we desire to present all the facts that have a bearing on those questions in dispute which have engendered our present party crisis. We are loath to leave anyone a reasonable basis for arguing that we have neglected to reply to one or another point or to throw light on one or another dark corner. We are experiencing, in our opinion, a crisis of growth. We are experiencing what Zinoviev once pithily described as the "birth pangs of a communist party." In the field of obstetrics as well as in the field of politics, these birth pangs can be moderated, and finally eliminated entirely, not by an amateurish approach, not by a futile wringing of hands and whining and whimpering, not by prayer, but by increasing our fund of knowledge.

In the present case, this document aims to contrast two main lines of thought and action: the line of revolutionary Marxian politics—principled politics, which make possible a consistent, firm and progressive course; and on the other side, personal combinationism, cliquism and unprincipled politics, which can produce only an inconsistent, weak-kneed and essentially reactionary course. The first is the line for which our group has fought, first in the Communist League of America and for the past year in the Workers Party of the U.S. The second is the contribution made by the Abern-Weber group.

The contrast can be made only by presenting the two lines, by describing them, by recording what each of them looked like in theory and practice at each stage of our development, by checking them with the results they yielded. In order that the contrast may be scrupulously exact, we have preferred to present not merely our opinions, but indisputable factual material: minutes, convention records, theses, resolutions, motions, statements, letters, etc. Without them, no objective judgment of the party situation is possible. The work of our coming convention, which has the task of making just such a judgment, will, we hope, be facilitated by this compilation.

Max Shachtman
New York, January 20, 1936

Two Lines in the Fusion

The Workers Party has its roots in the two groups that came together to found it in December 1934, the Communist League of America and the American Workers Party. If we deal, at least at the outset, primarily with the former, it is not out of narrow patriotism for the organization to which many of us once belonged, but for these reasons: firstly, because an account of what occurred within the CLA, especially in the last year of its existence, is indispensable to an understanding and illustration of the political course of our group; and secondly, because the internal struggle of the same period in the CLA is, in any case, reproduced on a more extensive scale in the WP today.

The CLA was built up in the course of a protracted struggle for the principles of revolutionary Marxism. Occurring as it did in the face not only of the most violent opposition of the powerfully organized Stalinist apparatus, but of a series of discouraging defeats of the proletariat on a world scale, and in a period of social and political reaction, this struggle necessarily limited the scope of the League's expansion and influence. Understanding the nature of this struggle, the leadership of the League set itself firmly against any illusions of an early "mass influence." The main work of the League was conceived to be of a propagandistic nature: the presentation and development of the ideas of the International Left Opposition, and the formation of a solid cadre of revolutionists capable of defending these ideas.

In this respect the CLA was far from unique in the history of the movement. It was merely passing through the first of what may, roughly speaking, be called the three stages of the evolution of the revolutionary organization: a propaganda group which concentrates on hardening the initial cadres on the basis of clearly defined principles; then a more active group in the process of transition to a mass movement, which concentrates on presenting its formerly elaborated principles to the masses in the form of agitational, day-to-day slogans, but which is not yet strong enough to step very far beyond the boundaries of literary and oral agitation; finally, the larger movement, which not only calls itself a party but which can discharge the responsibilities incumbent upon an organization claiming to defend the daily as well as the historical interests of the proletariat, which can actually set masses into motion—in other words, a party of action.

The objectively unwarranted attempt by numerous wiseacres who refused to understand this process of evolution, and who pursued "the masses" without "wasting time" on forging the instrument—cadres—without which systematic revolutionary work in the class struggle is inconceivable, always ended either in opportunism or adventurism. The chief protagonists of such attempts in this country, Weisbord and Field, ended up, as is known, without "mass work" and without cadres. These furious critics of our "sectarianism" finished with the most miserable and sterile of all sects.

The position of the CLA was complicated, moreover, by its position as a faction of the Third International, operating outside of it. Like its propagandistic position in general, this was not a matter of choice, but a condition dictated by a series of objective circumstances, primary among which was the fact that the Comintern had not yet exhausted its possibilities as a revolutionary Marxian organization, and that it was impossible to establish, a priori, whether or not it could be brought back to the road of proletarian internationalism by a combination of our work and the pressure of events themselves.

With the accession to power of the Hitlerites, and the unanimous endorsement by the Comintern sections of the treacherous capitulation of the Stalinists in Germany, the International Left Opposition voted to cut loose from the Third International. The slogan was issued: Build the Fourth International! Build new communist parties in every country! This decision could not but have profound effects on every section of the Left Opposition movement, and, in turn, upon the revolutionary movement in general.

In every country, at least in the important ones, the sections of the ILO (International Left Opposition) were confronted with the imperative need of making a decisive turn. The role of a faction of the Third International had to be given up, and the road taken towards an independent movement for new parties and a new International. A tremendous historical task by its very nature, it could neither be decreed nor accomplished overnight. Everywhere, the ILO entered a transitional stage, between a propagandist group (a faction) and an independent mass organization (a party). This stage was represented by the interval between ***proclaiming the need*** of a new International and new parties and their actual establishment. It was not enough to proclaim the need of the new party, nor even to recognize the gap referred to. The essence of the problem was: how, in each country, to bridge this gap in the briefest possible time allowed by the concrete conditions prevailing in the land and the relationship of forces in the working class and revolutionary movements.

That is to say, the general acknowledgment of the need of the new party related essentially to the reasons for its formation; it was not yet sufficient as the instrument for forming it. The instrument was (and is) the strategy and tactics that must be applied in each specific country in order to arrive in the swiftest and solidest manner at the goal.

In arriving at the strategy and tactics to be employed in the United States for attaining our goal, we were fortunate in having at our command the rich treasure trove of experience of the revolutionary movement for decades back. We invented no new method, because none was needed. We did not have to wonder and fumble, because we were provided by Marxism (i.e., by the distillation of living experience) with the key to our problem. But in no case is this key already completely grooved for every situation. Revolutionary politicians—like locksmiths—must take the broad, blank key which is already generally outlined by Marxism and adjust it to the grooves of the concrete situation; otherwise the door to the problem will not yield to our efforts.

In addition to wanting to build something, one must know how. And in the case of building the revolutionary party, alas! there is no simple, universal, rigid formula. The First International, for example, was unevenly developed and heterogeneously composed. The *Communist Manifesto* was written as the program of the (nonexistent) International Communist Party, but it was compelled to set down different tactical approaches to the problem of creating this party in the various countries: to revolutionary democrats, militant nationalists, trade unionists, social reformists, etc. The Third International, which marked the second attempt to form the International Communist Party, came into being after the Russian Revolution, which gave it incalculable advantages over its predecessor. Yet even its task was no easy one, and its development was far from uniform. It is sufficient to mention the fact that from October-November 1914, when the need for the Third International was first proclaimed, until the formal founding of the International in March 1919, four and a half years elapsed. And even then, at the First Congress, the International was little more than a name and an idea outside of Russia.

The parties themselves were built differently in different countries. In Spain with the revolutionary syndicalists and the young socialists. In Germany by a fusion of the tiny Communist Party with the large left wing of the Independent Social Democratic Party. In England by a merger of four communist groups (plus one socialist temperance society). In France and the United States by winning the majority of the official Socialist Party. In Italy by breaking off a minority of the official Socialist

Party, and then by fusing this minority with a subsequent communist majority of the same SP. In Norway by the direct affiliation to the CI of the federated Labor party. In Czechoslovakia by the affiliation en bloc of the official social democracy. In China by the direct transformation of a propagandist group of students and intellectuals into a proletarian communist party.

In a word, there was and could be no universal formula, applicable everywhere and under all conditions. More accurately, if there was a universal formula, it was this: the small propagandist groups of communists must convert themselves into mass communist parties by winning to their side the militant workers who are moving, however uncertainly and hesitantly at first, in the same general direction.

In the work of building the American section of the Fourth International, the leadership of the CLA derived its "national" line from the international line. Six years of intensive assimilation of the ideas of proletarian internationalism as set forth in the programmatic material and defended in the struggles of the ILO (now the ICL [International Communist League]) had prepared the CLA to act automatically in that spirit. The international line was dictated to us by a ***universal turn*** from propaganda groups or sects to the mass movement, to the masses, towards the formation of independent parties ***internationally***. In this sense, the turn of the ICL was basically an ***international turn***. (Only because it has entered into our current jargon shall we speak henceforth of a "French turn" too; in essence it is really a misnomer, for the tactic employed by the French Bolshevik-Leninists was merely an application, in the field of concrete French political realities, of the international turn from propagandist faction to independent party.)

Because conditions differ in each country, because the relationship of forces is different, the tactical line that must be applied to reach the goal of the new International and new parties must also, of necessity, differ. At this point, one can establish the difference between the sectarian idealist and the active, Marxian materialist. The former proceeds from an idea, rigidly conceived and unadjustable to concrete material realities. Wherever the latter fail to conform to his preconceived idea, he turns his back contemptuously and angrily upon them and enters a world of fantasy which corresponds to his idea. That is why sectarianism means isolation, unreality. The Marxian materialist not only derives his ideas from the material and concrete reality, but bases his activities upon it, and, taking things as they actually are, plunges into the living world in order to shape it into "what it should be." If the Marxian philosopher must not only interpret the world, but also change it, it is necessary, in order to accomplish the latter, to approach it first as it is in reality, and not as if it was already "what it should be," as if it was already changed.

That is why the Marxists in every section of the ICL applied the international turn concretely, i.e., in different ways in each country, differing in accordance with the realities of the organized social and political life of the working class, and yet were able to endorse each other's tactics without, by that fact, revealing any difference in principle or strategy. In France, the tactic used to carry out the international turn carried the Bolshevik-Leninists into a section of the Second International. In England, it made them a faction of a centrist party affiliated with none of the Internationals. In Holland, it carried them to a fusion with a leftward-moving centrist organization, the OSP [Independent Socialist Party], for the purpose of forming an independent revolutionary Marxian party of the Fourth International. In Australia, it carried them to their self-transformation into an independent party—as it did in Chile and elsewhere. In other countries, the international turn did not (nor, given the concrete conditions, could it as yet) change the organizational position of the section of the ICL. Widely though the tactics differed in each country, the CLA leadership and membership were able to support them all, with understanding and enthusiasm, because there was no conflict in the various tactics pursued so far as intelligent Marxists were concerned.

In carrying out this international turn from a faction to an independent party, the ICL underwent an acute crisis.* This crisis has more than a purely "historical" significance, because at bottom the problems involved are identical with those which underlie the present situation in the Workers Party.

At every turn in world politics, especially when it is an abrupt turn, the revolutionary movement experiences a

* Not the ICL alone, to be sure. The debacle in Germany left no section of the labor movement unscathed. If it necessitated the turn of the ICL which thereupon produced a crisis in its ranks, it should not be forgotten that it also produced the complete upsetting of the "Third Period" philosophy in the Third International and the still far-from-ended convulsions in the Second International. The CPLA, for example, also felt its effects, for what happened in Germany and subsequently precipitated the movement for a new party in the ranks of this semi-trade union, semi-political organization and led to the formation of the American Workers Party in Pittsburgh in December 1933, an event of signal progressive importance. In the CPLA (1933-34) the effects of the world crisis in the labor movement manifested themselves in an almost exclusively progressive and healthy manner.

crisis of greater or lesser acuteness. It may be characterized as the crisis engendered by the need of adaptation to the new situation or the new requirements. In this period, two currents tend to crystallize in the movement. One, represented by the conservative, sectarian element, clings to the yesterday, which the new situation has rendered obsolete. The other, the progressive element, brings over into the tomorrow only that part of yesterday which fits the new situation. In a small propaganda group, a sect (be it in the best or the worst sense of the term), the crisis seems to assume particularly acute forms. The group is rigidly trained, and this is its great positive side because it steels a firm cadre. But inevitably some, instead of becoming steeled—that is, firm but flexible—become petrified and are unable to bend to the requirements of the new situation. Therein lay the essence of the crisis of the ICL, which produced rifts in a number of its sections.

Politics and the class struggle are hard taskmasters. They command and we must jump. Else we remain marking time, on one spot, and the living movement leaves us behind. The group, instead of contributing its trained cadres to the living movement, becomes a reactionary obstacle to proletarian progress. On the whole, it may be said that the years of training the cadres prepared the CLA for the "jump" from a faction to a party. But it would be blindness to deny that, in another sense, the past of the CLA—its isolation from healthful contact with the mass movement—was a heavy heritage. Its leadership was composed not of "group people" but of "party people," founders and builders of the Communist Party in this country and even of the revolutionary movement before it. They did not "choose" the group existence; it was forced upon them. They could not arbitrarily or artificially break out of the circle existence whenever they wanted to (as Weisbord and Field tried to do with such fatal results). They had to wait for the proper moment and the propitious situation. The international turn of the ICL was the indication that the moment and the situation had arrived.

But it cannot be underscored sufficiently: the whole history of the labor movement reveals an iron law operating in the evolution of such groups. Under certain conditions, they—and they alone—play a consistently progressive role. Under other conditions, they may be converted into their opposite and play a reactionary role. Under the new conditions of the struggle, the CLA leadership (Cannon, Shachtman, Swabeck), in harmony with the decisive elements of the ICL, declared: If we do not break out of our sectarian, propagandistic existence, we are doomed! This formula we repeated and repeated until it became part of the living consciousness of the bulk of the CLA membership and thus prepared them for the big step forward that had to be taken.

This indisputable formula encountered, however, not a little resistance. We who had stood firmly by the principles and organization of our movement for years, resisting successfully every effort to dilute them in an opportunistic sense, undisturbed by the superficial critics of our intransigent and stubborn adherence to fundamental principle (which they erroneously labelled "sectarianism"), were suddenly, but not unexpectedly, confronted by comrades who had gotten a rush of organizational patriotism to the head—at the wrong time, in the wrong place, and in the wrong way. What? We are doomed, you say? "Cannon and Shachtman have no faith in the CLA"—"The CLA is not just a 'nucleus' of the new party"—"The CLA is not a swamp or a sect"—"They are preparing to liquidate us into some centrist morass or other"—and more of the same.

Yet, our formula remained indisputable. A propaganda group which, when the situation demands a turn to the masses, does not make this turn, and make it resolutely and decisively, is doomed to hopeless sectarianism and SLPism in various degrees of disintegration. Witness Lhuillier in France, Weisbord in the United States—to go no further back into the history of the revolutionary movements. The idea that under such conditions the menace of disintegration can be shouted away by patriotic declamations or decreed away by law, is infantile. That such infantile ideas actually existed in the CLA is attested by the fact that, in the course of the negotiations between us and the AWP, a motion was introduced into our New York branch "rejecting" the "theory (!) that the League must disintegrate if the fusion between the two organizations is not consummated." The adoption of such a resolution, especially if it were done by unanimous vote, would undoubtedly have been a great help...something like a witch doctor's incantations against evil spirits.

These general considerations determined the line of the CLA leadership in carrying out the international turn in the United States. We started from the premise that the CLA was not the new party, but one of its component parts—not a small or insignificant one, but still only a part. Our problem, essentially, was to find that particular link in the chain which, when grasped, could pull along as large a part of the chain as conditions permitted. Our task was to grasp the link closest at hand.

Our first approach was to the Gitlow group, not because we were groping about uncertainly, nor yet because together we could launch the party. Gitlow was then closest to our position, and our plan was to establish with his group a cohesive principled bloc with which to approach other, larger groups. With Gitlow,

we were infinitely more intransigent and curt than subsequently with the AWP, just because, formally speaking, Gitlow was closer to our views than the AWP. The apparent contradiction is resolved by this consideration: The Gitlow group was composed of a handful of members, politically already matured, and not representing a ***movement***, both from the standpoint of forces and of direction. The negotiations with Gitlow failed because of his opportunistic position, from which he could not be swayed for the essential reason that he did not base himself upon any movement that could be gotten to exert pressure upon him in our direction. The negotiations with the United Workers Party, also undertaken by the CLA at about the same time, likewise failed, because of the UWP's ultraleftism.

Our attitude towards these little groups was not arbitrarily determined, and we did not bring our negotiations with them to a speedy conclusion out of caprice or neglect. Our conduct here, as in the case of our totally different conduct towards the AWP, which was, programmatically speaking, to the right of these groups, was determined entirely by a thought-out political line. As we wrote in the pre-convention thesis of the CLA concerning the difference in attitude:

> As with the Gitlow-Field clique, so with Weisbord, any more time spent in considering collaboration or unity would be so much time wasted, and wasted just when we require it most. If we turn our backs completely upon this perfidious sect (read also: UWP, etc.) which is "closer" to us, and at the same time approach the AWP which is "not so close" to us, there is nothing arbitrary in our respective attitudes. It merely means that just because we are engaged in dealing and possibly fusing with a group which contains centrist trends, it is necessary for the Bolshevik-Leninist group to be firmer, more homogeneous, and to resist every effort of disloyal phrasemongerers to disrupt our ranks. Any other attitude would not be serious.

At the same time, by our brief negotiations with these groups, by "skirmishing" with them first, we disposed of them, that is, we exhausted them as possibilities for the new movement.

It was the development in the Conference for Progressive Labor Action (CPLA) which presented the CLA with the first serious movement for the new party. In December 1933 the CPLA, at its Pittsburgh convention, converted itself into the American Workers Party, separate and apart from the SP and the CP, and elected a Provisional Organizing Committee [POC] to prepare a convention for July 4, 1934, at which to launch the new party definitely.

The task of a leadership is to be on the alert for developments, to take the initiative, to foresee, to act in time, in a word—to lead. Because we had seriously adopted the orientation towards a new party, and refused to console ourselves with the ridiculous and misplaced patriotic cry—"We must have faith in the CLA"—the AWP occupied our attention from the very first day—and even before then! On November 23, 1933, we adopted a motion in our Resident Committee which read: "That we confer with C. of the CPLA attempting to get him to take up the fight definitely for the New International at the convention and that we also communicate with Allard to the same effect." After the Pittsburgh convention, the January minutes of the Resident Committee of the CLA read: "Reports by Shachtman and Swabeck: A lengthy discussion ensued on the AWP at the end of which it was agreed that the emergence of the AWP is to be given the most serious attention since it is the strongest single group which has come out for a new party. It was further agreed to address an open letter to the AWP the purpose of which is to involve them in a discussion on the principled foundation for a new revolutionary party in America. Cannon, Shachtman and Swabeck assigned as a subcommittee to draft this open letter, which is to be based upon the general conclusions of this discussion."

The open letter to the AWP, which inaugurated the discussions that finally led to the fusion, was not sent on the assumption that the AWP was a communist organization which stood on the same principles as the CLA. Our conception was that the AWP represented a centrist formation with highly significant left-wing elements in it and even more left-wing potentialities. Left "to itself," the AWP might develop into a considerable centrist force in the United States and seriously impede if not entirely prevent, for a period of time, the crystallization of the revolutionary Marxian party. And the problem of building the revolutionary Marxian party is ***today***, for the Workers Party, just as much a problem of preventing the growth of a strong centrist party in this country, as it was a dual problem two years ago when the CLA first approached the AWP.

We analyzed the AWP not only ***as it was***, but ***as it was becoming***, that is, in the process of its development, which revealed the great capacities it had for moving to the left, along the line of revolutionary Marxism. We did not—we had no right to—condemn it because it was a centrist organization and not yet a full-fledged communist movement. None of us had been born "Trotskyists"; all of us had had to go through more than one stage of development before reaching the position we then occupied. It would have been, and it still is, the height of sectarian insolence on our part to "forbid" anyone else the possibility of developing—at a later stage than we—in the same direction. Precisely because we had no sectarian prejudices we conceived it our revolutionary duty and task to facilitate the further development to the left

of the scores of revolutionary militants who had grouped themselves around the AWP.

Our approach to the AWP was therefore calculated to facilitate contact with it, to begin to break down not only those prejudices which naturally existed between the two groups, but also those which were shrewdly cultivated in the ranks of the AWP by such incorrigible right-wingers as Salutsky-Hardman. We counted firmly upon the inherent potential strength of those elements in the AWP who really wanted a Marxian party, in contrast to the Hardmans who were striving to establish an "American" centrist organization.

In all our dealings with the AWP, therefore, our tactics contained this highly important ingredient: to crystallize the left wing, to strengthen its hand, to heighten its consciousness and to isolate the right wing. How strengthen the left, itself not very mature? By depriving the right wing of one after another of its demagogic and reactionary arguments, by preventing them from playing on the prejudices of the backward elements, by making it possible—by our own conduct—for the left wing in the AWP to continue the fight for unity with the CLA. Ultimata, peremptory demands for a "complete program," intransigent tones and demands would have played right into the hands of the right wing. Any indication that we were merely interested in a "clever maneuver," in chipping off a few left-wing members, of not being seriously concerned and determined about the fusion, would have amounted to so many gifts to the right wing.

It should be remembered that, ***ostensibly***, this right wing was powerful. At the Pittsburgh convention of the AWP, Salutsky was the dominant figure, the political keynoter and tone-setter. Yet, it was precisely our estimate of the AWP as a movement which caused us so little apprehension about his significance. We judged him to be—and correctly—an accidental and not an "indigenous" element in the AWP, composed as it was of proletarian militants who wanted to be revolutionists, and not clever Menshevik politicians like Salutsky. We believed (and in this we showed far more "faith" in the CLA and its forces than all the clamorous pseudo-patriots in our own ranks) that, step by step, and not ultimately, at one blow, we could bring the decisive forces of the AWP to the position of unity with the CLA on a revolutionary platform and reduce the right wing to insignificance and impotence. But this could only be accomplished by an at once firm and flexible policy, above all by a positive policy which drove consistently in one direction.

In one direction? Then you had no alternative variant? How many times we heard this "criticism" in the CLA from the Oehlerite and Weberite opponents or skeptics of the fusion, most of whom were so sure that there would never be a fusion that they kept demanding another variant! But this possibility was also taken into consideration by us, for, unlike our opponents, we tried to think things out to the end—always a good procedure in politics.

"The AWP is a centrist party, with a centrist program and a centrist leadership," we wrote in our preconvention thesis for the CLA.

> What is important in our approach to it, however, is the fact that it is moving in a leftward direction and is the only one of the sizable groups to record itself for a new party. Our attitude toward the AWP must be based upon the dynamics of its evolution and not the statics of its program or leadership. It must be based upon the realization that the steps to the left already taken officially by this party must reflect a growing left-wing pressure exerted not only by ourselves and by events from the outside, but also by forces within its own ranks or sympathetic with it. It must especially be based upon the conception that our task is not only to help in the formation of the new ***communist*** party but also to prevent or to impede the formation of a new ***centrist*** party....
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> If we do not succeed in adopting a jointly satisfactory program and the fusion does not take place at the present time, our fundamental attitude toward the AWP does not change, at least not for the next period. Should it hold its own convention and officially launch its own party, it cannot but be a centrist party. Under such circumstances, we would continue, still from the outside, and in close collaboration with all sympathetic elements within, to put forward our demands for fusion on a principled basis, always preceding from the standpoint that our object is not only the formation of a new communist party but also to prevent or hamper the formation of a centrist party.

It is in the sense indicated in this thesis that there was at least one kernel of truth in the famous motion presented in the New York branch of the CLA "rejecting the theory" that the CLA must disintegrate if there is no fusion. If the failure to fuse could be placed at the door of the right-wing leaders of the AWP, *it* would disintegrate, and not the CLA. But if the failure to fuse was due to the stupidity or sectarianism of the CLA, not even a motion of the NY branch could have prevented it from falling apart. We pursued such a policy as made it impossible for the right-wing opponents of fusion in the AWP to pull their organization away from the unity. And the results of our policy, in contrast, as we shall presently see, to Oehler's, put the AWP right wing in a position where they could not move effectively against the unity.

No clearer confirmation of the correctness of our course is required than the elaborate minutes of the special POC meeting of the AWP held in New York, a few short weeks before the fusion convention—November 6, 1934—when the right wing made a desperate last-minute effort to sabotage the unity. The dilemma into

which we had put the right wing was expressed by several of the POC members: "Some people have been attracted by talk of merger," said Budenz, "and not going through with it would be hard to explain away.... Those who oppose merger must make plain who will preserve the AWP and what we'll use for material resources, because if we change our minds now we'll seem to oppose unity and we'll have a lot of explaining to do."

Precisely! That is precisely what we meant when we wrote in our pre-convention thesis about the eventuality of no immediate fusion; that alone would suffice to answer all the triumphant questions about the "second variant." "If merger is called off now," added Karl Lore, "we'll be called traitors and fakers, but that doesn't bother me. What does bother me is that we'll get the horse-laugh. We can stand practically anything but being thought damned fools; that's hard to live down." Although Lore exaggerates a little here, he is essentially correct in revealing the position the AWP would have been put in if it decided to face the CLA with the need of dealing with the "second variant" so dear to the Oehlerites and Weberites.

By following an elaborated political line, thought out to the end and uninfluenced by any accidental or episodic phenomena—which threw our CLA critics into a panic or a frenzy every other week during the course of the negotiations—we succeeded:

In involving the AWP so thoroughly in discussions of the fundamental principled questions that it was politically impossible for the right wing to pull the AWP out of the negotiations;

In having the AWP drop the idea of formally launching their party, by themselves, at the originally proposed July 4th convention;

In helping to crystallize and strengthen the hand of the left wing around West, Hook and Ramuglia;

In driving a deep wedge between the militants in the field and the right-wing politicians at the center (Salutsky & Co.);

In accomplishing a progressive improvement of the program, by means of one revision after another—by means of public criticism in our press and comradely discussion in the negotiations—until the final adoption of the Declaration of Principles;

In involving the AWP to a certain extent in joint practical work (anti-war, unions, unemployed, mass meetings, joint statements, etc.) so as to establish harmonious contact between the ranks and to diminish the chances for a rupture of the negotiations;

In completing the isolation of the right wing and the total elimination, in the end, of its most dangerous spokesman, Salutsky.

And finally, in actually consummating the fusion on a "rigidly principled basis," as Trotsky puts it.

The policy was not carried out by the CLA leadership without opposition—now overt, now covert—in the ranks. That iron law of which we spoke above operates not only with organizations as a whole, but more specifically it affects individuals and sections or groups in them. At the time the sharp turn becomes imperative to the progress of the movement, they find themselves unable to accommodate themselves to the new situation. They cling to the past, to the comforts—physical as well as political—of a circle existence, to ideas and phrases learned by rote, important enough in themselves but no substitute for the living movement. They translate their sterile sectarianism into a strident radicalism, their conservatism into an ultra-revolutionary intransigence, their inertia into a suspicion of every step forward as "opportunism" and "liquidation." To be sure, nobody was opposed to the fusion explicitly. But that was little consolation, for even Bismarck knew that the most effective way to oppose an idea is to favor it "in principle." What is politically important is that tendencies were clearly evident in the CLA which objectively opposed the fusion. Some manifestations of these tendencies were:

The League should immediately declare itself the party.

"Just look at who is leading the AWP: Salutsky, Muste, Budenz!"—the tendency that saw this or that or those leaders, but not the ranks.

"The AWP has no membership anyway; there isn't a single AWPer in Chicago"—a complete failure to see the significance and importance of the organization, of the movement.

"We can't fuse unless we go into the new party as a faction"—the assumption that the new party would be centrist.

"After they agree to our program, we should refuse to unite with them until a long period of practical collaboration during which we'll test them."

And more of the same.

The most consistent spokesman of all these anti-fusion tendencies, the rallying center for them, was the Oehler-Stamm faction. At no time did Oehler reveal that he had the slightest understanding of the problem involved, of the strategy and tactics to be pursued, any more than he showed an understanding of the simple, clear-cut tactic adopted by our French comrades in entering the SP. In both Oehler's case and ours, the problem in both countries was fundamentally the same; only we approached the problem from the standpoint of living Marxism and Oehler from the standpoint of ossified sectarianism.

"The decisive question to determine a Marxian party and non-Marxian party or group today," read Oehler's motion in our Resident Committee, February 26, 1934, "revolves around the question of the permanent revolution and the theory of socialism in one country.... The Left Opposition will not compromise on principle to form a new party. We will not enter a party that has a non-Marxian program through omissions. Compromise on other questions only on the basis of a fight for these points first."

The Oehlerite conception, therefore, was that the new party could be formed by a fusion between the CLA and AWP only if the latter agreed to the theory of the permanent revolution and included it in the program—it and a few dozen other things, for "we will not enter a party that has a non-Marxian program through omissions." Sinful opportunists that we are, we had an entirely different conception. In the first place, we do not believe that a national section of the Fourth International can write its own program; that is the work of the International, for our program can only be the world program; a declaration of principles or platform is adequate for the time being. Secondly—O sin of sins!—we were prepared to fuse with the AWP even if we could get no agreement on the declaration of principles, to fuse on the basis of a concrete program of action for the next period which did not stand in conflict with our principles, and to depend upon joint collaboration and discussion during the course of it to bring closer the day when a Marxian platform or program could be adopted by the united party. From the very beginning, therefore, we found ourselves in irreconcilable conflict with the Oehler standpoint, the adoption of which would have made fusion impossible from the start.

Oehler's attitude towards the famous first draft of the declaration of principles drawn up by Shachtman and Muste again indicated his purely negative position. This draft, inferior though it was from a Marxian standpoint to the second (final) draft, was quite sufficient—assuming an immediate improvement had not been possible—for unity. On the fundamental questions, it took the correct position. Oehler denounced it as centrist "through and through" and rejected it as a basis of fusion. Yet, it was precisely this draft which made it possible to drive deeper the wedge between Muste, who then occupied an intermediate position, and the left wing of the AWP on the one side, and the Salutsky right wing on the other. By isolating the right wing on the basis of the first draft, the hand of the pro-fusion and left-wing elements was so strengthened that the reinforcement and clarifications of the second draft were made possible in the subsequent negotiations. Oehler simply did not understand that every successive blow at the right wing facilitated the advancement and joint adoption of a more thoroughgoing and comprehensive Marxian position. The difference between this "radical" and us "opportunists" was that his policy would systematically play into the hands of Salutsky.

Oehler's attitude towards the discussion of organizational questions with the AWP again betrayed his fundamentally anti-fusion position. As late as October 22, a few short weeks before the fusion convention was scheduled to convene, when it was essential to discuss the distribution of positions, merger of the press, etc., etc.—all those questions without which the very next step on the fusion agenda could not be taken—Oehler voted in our Resident Committee against dealing in organizational questions with the AWP representatives. And on the very eve of the fusion convention, November 19, 1934, Oehler "withholds" his vote on the organizational proposals jointly arrived at by the negotiators. It is evident that to have attempted to come to a fusion convention without common agreement, not only on principled, but on organizational questions, would have been equivalent to calling off the fusion convention entirely.

Towards the very end, the convention city took on an unusual importance. Our proposal was to hold the separate conventions of the AWP and CLA simultaneously, in the same city, and at the adjournment of the individual conventions to reconvene in the joint fusion assembly. We knew that the AWP's right wing was trying desperately to stall off the unity at all costs and by any means. The old CLA decision in favor of Chicago as the convention city was out of the question for two reasons, one practical (the Chicago organization could not house anything like all the delegates) and the other political (the AWP would not consider Chicago as the convention city, and that for legitimate and convincing reasons). In spite of the obvious wisdom in our proposal, Oehler insisted on Chicago.

Finally, to climax a course that would mean blowing up the fusion for the coming period, Oehler proposed that we hold our own convention at the same time as the AWP held its gathering, but instead of reconvening into a unity convention immediately upon adjournment, the delegates should be sent home to "discuss" the question of fusion (we had been discussing only for a year!) and then come back, a month later, to a unity convention! Not only was this an infuriatingly irresponsible proposal to sabotage the unity, but it was the direct counterpart of the AWP right wing's plan for disrupting the fusion! Almost at the very moment that Oehler was making this scandalous proposal in the CLA committee, the right-wingers were mobilizing (fortunately in vain, but not through any fault of Oehler's!) at the special POC meeting of the AWP on November 6. The crucial

significance of the Oehler proposal may be judged from the minutes of this POC meeting.

"I would like us to discuss the proposition that talk of joint convention be suspended till the AWP convention passes on it," said Salutsky-Hardman. "We must have separate conventions so that if merger fails to go through the reaction will be as slight as possible," said Budenz. "I propose that we call off all negotiations for the time being to give our members a chance to study the matter and prepare for the AWP convention," argued another worshipper of democratic formalities and opponent of fusion, McKinney, and he added: "I think...that the CLA is rushing things. In my opinion there's no hurry about this merger, and all negotiations towards a unity convention must be suspended."

Again, Hardman: "Motion to instruct negotiating committee to continue to discuss programmatic and organizational questions but to postpone the joint convention till the AWP convention passes on it." The proposal to postpone the joint convention was being fought for in order to stall the fusion, to strengthen the factional fences of the right wing, and eventually to defeat the fusion. As Arnold Johnson put it: "We can talk of postponement in hope of defeating merger, or of merging later on. I believe we are too far committed to withdraw. The AWP is only provisional and we have no right to insist that others join us. The time to vote No was at Valencia. I understood the Valencia decision to mean that we merge as soon as possible."

As can be seen, the question was not at all of a technical order, but of signal political significance. The Oehler line, at every stage, would have played right into Salutsky's hand. Nor is this astonishing. It would not be the first time that sectarian rigidity feeds right-wing opportunism and is fed by it. The revolutionary Marxian line cuts across them both. The spokesman for this line summed up the Oehler position in the Resolution of the Nineteen (Shachtman, Cannon, Swabeck, Lewit, Borkeson, Carter, Wright, etc., etc.) to the New York membership meeting to elect delegates to the CLA convention:

> In the United States, the policy of the Oehler group would have made it impossible for the League even to approach the AWP and to influence its evolution in a progressive sense; at best it would have reduced the whole problem to the level of a mere maneuver, barren of any serious political results, and would have totally excluded the possibility of bringing the AWP and the CLA to the present point of agreement on a Declaration of Principles and the holding of a fusion convention. The adoption of the Oehler policy, even at this late date, would directly jeopardize the completion of the fusion. By its formalistically rigid and negative approach to the problem, the Oehler group would deprive the CLA of that combination of firmness and flexibility which is necessary to the final adjustment of the extremely difficult organizational arrangements still pending. The manifest aim of the Oehler group to maintain a permanent faction and to carry its struggle against the National Committee and the International Secretariat into the new party carries with it a direct threat to the success of the new party and to its normal evolution towards a firm Bolshevik position. The emphatic rejection of the position of the Oehler group by our national convention is a prerequisite for the successful development of the new party and the increasing influence of the Bolshevik-Leninist kernel within it.

But that is precisely what the national convention of the CLA failed to do in the explicit, clear-cut Bolshevik way that the situation demanded of it. And it failed to do it because the resolution of Cannon and Shachtman was voted down by a combination of Oehlerite and Weberite delegates, so that Oehler was able to enter the new party without the CLA convention characterizing his political line on the fusion. And as will be seen, this was not the last time the Weberites played their role of shields for Oehler.

What was the Weberite position towards the whole fusion movement? Contrary to all the expectations of the critics, the unity negotiations were so patently successful and our line so unassailable, that even though Weber refused to characterize the political line and tendency of his ally Oehler, he was nevertheless compelled to present a motion endorsing the "main line of the National Committee in the course of the negotiations as basically correct and making possible the realization of the fusion." All the skeptics, the opponents of all varieties and degrees, suddenly became not only warm supporters of the fusion but in their tardy enthusiasm and zeal soon talked as if they had always been heartily in favor of it.

"We (we!) were always in favor of fusion on a proper basis (as we would be with any socialist left wing that agrees to a Marxist program)," writes Weber virtuously, in his December 29, 1935, letter to the International Secretariat of the ICL. "We may add that it was after discussion with Comrade Weber and on the latter's suggestion that Comrade Shachtman introduced the first motion into the NC of the CLA to start negotiations with Comrade Muste and the AWP. Our (our!) attitude towards the fusion was never lukewarm—nor on the other hand was it uncritical."

Not uncritical, to be sure. And the criticism? That is also recorded. "We took issue with the Cannon group on the question of fusion," said Gould at the New York membership discussion meeting on July 27, 1935, in a speech circulated throughout the country as a Weber caucus document. "We did not stand opposed to the fusion, nay we were wholeheartedly for it.... Cannon

saw no future in the CLA. He lost faith in it and felt that without a fusion we would perish. Hence he proceeded to rush the party (Gould means the CLA—MS) into the fusion. His policy was fusion willy-nilly. It was not the rapidity with which the fusion was effected that was here objected to. It was the fact that the membership was not properly educated or prepared for the fusion. It was a top fusion, typical of the Cannon method."

For a leader of the group which recently fused "at the top" with the Muste group on the basis of purely "top" discussions between 2-3 Weberites and 2-3 Musteites, presumably on the French turn, Gould is obviously the person chosen by nature and destiny to polemicize against "top fusions typical of the Cannon method." But let us put aside for a moment this school-boyish objection to "top fusion" which reveals such a thoroughgoing ignorance of politics, strategy, tactics, tact and plain common sense, to say nothing of a cavalier contempt for facts. Let us concentrate instead on the other contentions.

According to Weber, "we" were *always* in favor and "our" attitude was *never* lukewarm. He echoes Glotzer, who makes the same assertion in his letter to the I.S. And Glotzer merely echoed Gould, according to whom "we" were not merely never lukewarm, but were wholeheartedly for it. Bear in mind these vehement protestations and then compare them with the truth, which is not established by the above assertions (it is brutally violated by them!) but by facts and documents.

The trouble with us, do you see, was that we saw no future for the CLA, we had lost faith in it and "felt that without a fusion we would perish"; so we rushed the CLA headlong into the fusion, because we favored it "willy-nilly." It is futile to ask for facts to sustain these assertions; none will be forthcoming, for the simple reason that none exist. But Gould's very criticism betrays his position. It was merely one side of the coin on whose obverse side was imprinted the policy of the AWP right wing.

Gould's arguments against us (made six months after the fusion; imagine how much sharper they must have been—and were!—six months before the fusion) are simply identical with the arguments made by Salutsky, Howe, McKinney, Cope and Budenz against the fusion with the CLA! Let us refer again to those highly instructive minutes of the special meeting of the POC of the AWP already referred to. We have already quoted from them to show who was opposed to the Cannon-Shachtman line when, as Gould puts it, they "proceeded to rush the CLA into the fusion," and *why* they opposed us. Now let us quote some more to show that, just as Gould (unlike the faithless Cannon) had faith in the CLA, there were others who "had faith" in the AWP; that just as Gould did not think we would perish if there was no fusion, there were similars in the AWP who had the same view; that just as Gould merely wanted to prepare their membership for the fusion....

McKinney: I propose that we call off all negotiations for the time being to give our members a chance to study the matter and prepare for the AWP convention.... I don't believe that we must necessarily build our party on the merger of groups. I think also that we must not ignore the past of the CPLA and that the CLA is rushing things. In my opinion, there's no hurry about this merger, and all negotiations toward a unity convention must be suspended.... If we don't merge with the CLA I think we'll get their good people anyway.

Howe: It is often said or implied by certain comrades that we are lost unless we fuse; do you agree?

McKinney: I think we're more likely to lose out if we do fuse. Fusion doesn't matter in Pittsburgh. We'd get perhaps 8 more members. Why, we can get 8 or 28 without fusing.

Cohen: Why don't you?...

Howe: The AWP is not bankrupt and merger if proposed as a last resort is based on a false premise. I see no sign of revolt in the CLA (Howe had evidently not heard of Gould!—MS) but I see no reason either to merge the bankrupts or to merge a healthy AWP with a bankrupt CLA....

Cope: There is a feeling that without the CLA the AWP can't exist. That means we started out bankrupt or got that way in the past year. I disagree. What strength will we gain? What material advantage is there?

But let us examine even more direct evidence of what "we" were always in favor of and how "our" attitude looked, not in the hazy post-fusion memories of the recently converted zealots, but in reality. "We" evidently means the leaders of the Weber caucus: Weber, Abern, Glotzer. Let us take them one by one.

On the question which revealed the basic divergence between our conception of the fusion and Oehler's, manifested in the Oehler motion of February 26 on "not entering a party that has a non-Marxian program through omissions" (referred to above), the Weberite caucus organizer and spokesman in the Resident Committee, Abern, declared "that he will reserve his vote for a subsequent meeting." Two meetings later, Abern, according to the records of March 21, 1934, requested that he be "recorded as voting for Oehler's motion in minutes No. 210 (that is, the February 26th meeting—MS) dealing with position in regard to the negotiations with the AWP." The March 21 meeting was the one at which Glotzer, just back from Europe with the latest dope on what to do and what not to do with centrists, made his international report. Abern's vote for Oehler

was therefore cast after consultation on the question with Glotzer. And more specifically what Glotzer's views on the fusion were, we shall soon see.

The key importance of the connection between the simultaneous separate conventions and the immediately following joint fusion convention, has already been discussed. What was Abern's position on this crucial point? Let the CLA committee minutes for October 22, 1934, supply the answer. Swabeck had just reported the AWP proposals for the convention:

> Motion by Shachtman: On the question of the unity city we orient on the following basis, the League and the AWP hold their conventions simultaneously and in the same city and at the adjournment of the regular business of the two organizations, the joint fusion convention shall thereupon take place.
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> Motion by Oehler: The CLA hold its convention in Chicago as previously agreed 3 times by the full NEC. That if the AWP cannot arrange its convention in the same city then we hold the joint convention later in another city, suitable to both organizations. That we endeavor to have at least a month minimum between the conventions, to enable the League delegates to return to our own branches following the CLA convention with the League convention report for branches to assimilate and to enable one or more issues of the *Militant* to follow up our own convention before we dissolve the League.

Cannon being out of town, the Resident Committee voted as follows: Shachtman and Swabeck for the former's motion; Abern and Oehler for the latter's motion! This alarming deadlock was of course broken by Cannon's subsequent vote, much—should Salutsky's eyes ever peruse these pages—to the latter's chagrin. But let us imagine that in addition to Abern, there had been another Weberite on the committee that evening who was just as "wholeheartedly" in favor of the fusion. The deadlock would have been broken...the other way, Oehler's way! Let us imagine that the other Weberite was Glotzer. Being among those whose attitude was never "lukewarm" on the question, whose line would he have supported? Let us read his own words. They are just as long as they are wrong. And what is important in them is not only that they reveal a line on the fusion just a few shades more incorrect than Oehler's, more sterile in their pseudo-intransigence, but also a general line of thought which has manifested itself since the consummation of the fusion on other questions, and is manifesting itself at this very writing on the key question now before the movement. And here is again an indication that we are dealing not with faded reminiscences of the past, but with political lines that relate to our present-day problems! But back to wholehearted Glotzer of 1934:

> What I told the European comrades and LD [Trotsky] was, I found out later, my own opinion and not the opinion of the National Committee. I told LD that our aim in addressing the statement to the Muste party was for the purpose of forcing a discussion in this centrist organization with the aim of winning the best elements to our point of view. I told him further that we regarded Muste, and not alone him but the entire leadership of the AWP, as a typical centrist leadership, people who will never become communists (What power of prediction! What penetration! What analysis!—MS).... I don't think that anyone raises objections (continued Glotzer in this letter, written March 26, 1934—MS) to negotiations or discussions. What is objectionable is the perspective of the committee, which has already put upon the agenda the question of fusion.... I told the committee that the perspective of fusion in the immediate future or at the next convention is not correct. That is not the first step.
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> The next step after an agreement on fundamentals is a protracted period of collaboration in order to determine the meaning of the change on the part of the centrists. If after such a period of collaboration it is seen that these people have seriously made a step towards communism and are developing in our direction, then, of course, the question of fusion can be taken up, but by no means to now discuss "practically" how the fusion will be carried through. You undoubtedly will understand that Oehler supported the remarks I made in the committee meeting. ("Undoubtedly understand" is hardly the word!—MS)...Why has our NC acted in this way? Here is my opinion. Our committee has no confidence in the organization....
>
> I don't regard the League as a "swamp" whose only hope is fusion with the AWP. Anybody who feels that way should draw the conclusions of that position or perspective and act on the basis of this opinion. The League is no swamp. The League is healthy in its ranks, it has vitality, it has power, it has every possibility of forging ahead. (Follows more patriotic pathos—MS)...The lunge for the AWP on the part of the NC must be described politically (and actually you know this to be so) as a lack of confidence in the organization. That is why Cannon said at the NY functionaries' and membership meeting that our hope lies in the fusion with the AWP. Do I have to add that I do not agree with that?
>
> I think if you were to complete your national tour* and continued to follow the line that you are presenting, you may convince half or the majority of the organization

*Shachtman was then making a national tour for the CLA, reporting also to the membership in every branch on the facts and perspectives of the fusion, i.e., contrary to the absurd falsehood of Gould, he was seeing to it that the membership *was* "properly educated" and "prepared for the fusion." Gould's trouble then, like the trouble of all the Weberites (with the prominent exception of Satir, who understood the line of the NC and agreed with it), was that he refused to be educated and prepared in favor of the fusion. He was "wholeheartedly" in favor of it...just like Glotzer.

> because the matter more or less is in your hands. That is the occasion for my letter. I want to ask you to please consider very seriously what I say and change your approach on this question. I don't propose that you speak against the negotiations because they are absolutely correct. What I propose is that you do not prepare the membership for a fusion but, quite the contrary, prepare them for ensuing conflicts. I think you should tell the membership that if we do get a fundamental agreement there, the next stage is a protracted period of collaboration on practical questions in order to prove these people. Only such a period of collaboration can determine the question of fusion. To assume that the Musteites or Muste himself actually accept, believe and will work for our point of view or, say, for a communist point of view, is assuming entirely too much and is overlooking the fact that these people are centrists and not communists.

One cannot but feel that this is enough for the day to prove to the hilt Gould's contention that Cannon's crime was that he didn't prepare or educate the membership *for* the fusion, and that therein and only therein lay "our" difference with Cannon. Ah, what a fatal day it was for some people when the typewriter was invented! If this was Glotzer's opinion when he was "not lukewarm" but "wholehearted" in his support of fusion, what in god's name would it have been if he ***were*** lukewarm, or—heaven forbid!—if he were downright cold toward it? But this was in March, it will be said, and anybody can err. In the first place, a revolutionist should not conceal so serious an error of judgment; in the second place, he should not condemn those who failed to make his error but who had, instead, the correct line; and in the third place, the error was not fleeting in duration. On July 4, 1934, Glotzer still writes: "I am inclined however to think that even now, after all that has happened, you cling falsely to the hope that anything may come out of the negotiations. I am more and more convinced that there is nothing to be gained from them either in repute or in numbers. And I wonder whether you agree with Jim who says: We have got to unite with the AWP."

But couldn't this have been an aberration of an isolated Weberite, not infused with the same limitless enthusiasm for the fusion that made, let us say, Weber himself such an ardent and uncontrollable supporter of the fusion? The idea is preposterous. Glotzer complained at the CLA convention at the end of the year that we had not received any information about the fusion from the Resident Committee. However that may be (and it does not happen to be the case), he did receive plenty of "information" and views upon which he based the line of his letters, from his caucus colleagues, Weber and Abern. He was merely expressing the common opinion of the national Weber caucus—defended by Abern and Weber in New York, Glotzer in Chicago, Rae Ruskin in Los Angeles. What Weber thought of the question—we will not allow ourselves to quote from memory his week-in-week-out sniping attacks on the National Committee line in New York branch meetings—he put down in black on white. In his statement in favor of the French turn, written, not in March and not in July, but on August 20, 1934 (printed in the CLA *International Bulletin* No. 17), he wrote:

> There remains the question of the international effect of this movement in France.... It does not follow that we must pursue the same tactics now or necessarily orient our sections everywhere for the same policy. Yet such a merger carried out in France creates a predisposition in favor of the same kind of merger. Given the development of the same situation—and we see this on the way in America too—here, we are prepared to pursue the same policy that we urge on our French comrades.

Was our difference with the Weberites, therefore, over the question of our "bureaucratic indifference" towards preparing the CLA membership *for* the fusion, as it is put by Gould and other Weberites, who foolishly think that nobody will trouble to read what they would like to forget? Not in the least! It is characteristic of the Weberites that after they have taken an "independent" political line, and this line has proved to be wrong a dozen times over, they seek to conceal their debacle by insisting that they were always in political accord with us but that they differed with us merely on some organizational defect of ours.

Our line was to drive for the fusion and prepare the membership for it; their line was to prepare the membership against it. Our perspective, in February, in August, in November, was that the next step to be taken in forming the revolutionary Marxian party was the fusion with the AWP; their perspective, as late as the end of August, did not even mention the AWP, but envisaged the development of a situation—"we see this on the way in America too"—in which the CLA would emulate the French Bolshevik-Leninists, that is, enter the American Socialist Party. (I say "***their*** perspective" and not merely Weber's, because all the Weberites on the NC—Spector, Abern, Glotzer and Edwards—voted without reservations to endorse the Weber statement.) And yet, since we are neither Oehlerites nor Weberites, we did not foam at the mouth and break out into a hysterical rash at the "liquidators" and "opportunists" whose perspective it was to "dissolve the independent" organization into the SP. We voted against the Weber statement and attempted to argue it out objectively. We burned no crosses on the hills to call together the paladins of the clan to protect the sanctity of our independence from the "Weberite liquidators." We leave that kind of politics to the old women from whom nothing better can be expected.

One of the favorite accusations made against us by the Abern-Weber faction, spread down the corridors and along the national grapevine, and repeated constantly among themselves between sighs and moans over the sad state of the nation, is that we are "tail-endists." More will be said on this score later on. Suffice it for the moment to remind the reader: During the whole year of 1934, when the strategy and tactics of the fusion with the AWP were being elaborated in the committee and discussed—in New York almost constantly—not one single leader of the Weber group made a solitary positive proposal on the matter; not one single idea was contributed by it that would advance the fusion; on not a single occasion did any of them take the initiative in the great work which, at the convention, they grudgingly acknowledged had been accomplished. Nothing, literally nothing!

Where they couldn't give direct support to the Oehlerite agitation, they remained silent entirely. Where they contributed an idea, it was not towards fusion, but like Glotzer, against the fusion, or like Weber, for the perspective of entering the SP and letting the fusion with the AWP go hang. The initiative at every stage, the tactics, the complicated and delicate work of negotiation, the work of educating, enlightening and rallying the membership, fell exclusively to the lot of the bureaucrats, opportunists and men of little or no faith, Cannon, Shachtman and Swabeck. And by some miracle, compared with which the transformation of the wafer and the wine into the body and blood of Christ is a commonplace occurrence, the fusion was accomplished on a sound, satisfactory, revolutionary basis—as Gould, Glotzer and Weber will eagerly explain to you—in spite of everything Cannon and Shachtman could do to stop it.

One important stone is still missing from the mosaic of this instructive chapter of the record. In reply to a copy of Glotzer's letter of March 26, 1934, to Shachtman, a leading European comrade whose opinions Glotzer elicited wrote to him on April 10, 1934:

> There must be revolutionary elements in the AWP who are pushing toward us, for otherwise it would be incomprehensible why the leadership has committed itself so far. This situation must be utilized. If we declare ourselves ready for the fusion and the right wing of the AWP then puts on the brakes or prevents it entirely, we then have a very favorable point of departure toward the left wing.... We must not only understand and criticize centrism theoretically, not only submit it to political tests, but we must also maneuver organizationally towards it. Under certain conditions, fusion is the best maneuver. Only the fusion should not be superstitiously regarded as the termination of the process (that is, of the struggle against centrism—MS). The fusion can, under certain conditions, only yield better conditions for the continuation of the struggle against centrism. Naturally, the methods of the struggle must then be adapted to the united party.

It would surely have been regarded as a libel on the already harassed Glotzer to have predicted at that time that, not much more than a year later, he and his caucus colleagues would be first in a bloc and then in a single faction with those whom Glotzer himself designated as "people who will never become communists"—a faction whose primary aim is the smashing of those communists with whom Glotzer has always protested his fundamental solidarity in principle. But these miserable clique maneuvers, the politics of unprincipled combinationism, deserve more ample and searching treatment.

The "French" Turn and Organic Unity

The minutes of the Third National Convention of the CLA, which took place in New York at the end of 1934, directly on the eve of the fusion convention which launched the Workers Party, are, unfortunately, so tersely summarized that, without further elucidation and commentary, they do not afford the reader the possibility of getting a rounded picture of how the internal developments culminated in that organization before its dissolution into the new party. On all divisions in the convention there were not just two groups casting identical ballots, as was to be expected from the two fundamentally different lines of principle that separated the League, but ***three***. It is with this third group, as we shall see, that we must occupy ourselves in greater detail, all the more so because its origin, its political existence and position are more often than not shrouded in obscurity.

The position of the Oehler faction—formed months before the convention on a national scale and steadily nursed by an unceasing flow of factional documents—was entirely clear, more or less open and avowed, and, considering the fact that it proceeded from fundamentally wrong premises, the element of ambiguity in it was reduced pretty much to a minimum. The Oehlerites took a flatfooted stand against the so-called French turn on the grounds that the entry even of a small group or faction (what they called the "embryo party") into a reformist or centrist organization, regardless of the principled platform upon which it entered or for which it fought once inside, was equivalent to capitulation to social democracy, the furling of the revolutionary Marxian banner, liquidation of the organized Marxian movement, and consequently objective aid to the social patriots.

Like Bauer in Germany and Lhuillier in France, they opposed the "turn" on grounds of principle. That this sectarian view was not accidental or episodic was demonstrated by the policy they advocated with regard to

the fusion. The Oehler group, therefore, on the touchstone questions before the CLA—the "international" and the "national"—represented a fairly consistent, ultraleftist sectarian current. Because it was so flatly and openly avowed not only orally but in recorded documents, it was possible to deal with this group politically. Its position being clearly discernible, one could give it political support, or political opposition.

The position of the CLA leadership (Cannon, Swabeck, Shachtman)—which formed a group in New York only one month before the convention and never formed a group at all on a national scale—was equally well known and (in our opinion) even more consistent. Proceeding from conceptions already set forth on previous pages of this document, it took just as firm a stand for the entry of our French (and later our Belgian) comrades into the social democracy, as it did in favor of a policy which would make possible the speedy fusion with the AWP for the purpose of founding an independent Marxian party in the United States. And as has already been made clear, these were ***the*** two decisive questions facing the CLA during the last year of its existence.

Yet, while the great majority of the members of the League could not but support the basic position of the CLA leadership—and did in fact support it—and at the same time could not but reject the position of the Oehlerites—and did in fact reject it—the leadership found itself in the convention with a minority of the delegates supporting it. Why? Because in addition to the two groups referred to there was present a bloc of delegates representing a third group—Abern-Weber.

Another group? But a group must justify its organizational existence by a political platform. It is of the essence of political irresponsibility to form groups or factions on this, that or the other triviality, for such a course would inevitably end in the complete disintegration of the movement into light-minded cliques to whom politics is a sport. The "normal" state of the revolutionary movement is that in which each member presents his standpoint freely, and is thus able to influence other members and be influenced by them. A revolutionist does not recoil in moral horror from the prospect of forming a faction, even in a revolutionary Marxian organization, but only when political differences with other comrades, or aggregations of comrades, are so clear as to make the joint presentation of a platform or a systematic point of view, and its common, disciplined advocacy and defense, unmistakably advisable; or else, when bureaucratic repression in the organization so constricts the normal democratic channels of expression that a viewpoint can be effectively presented and defended only by the concerted action of a group.

Now, the latter situation did not obtain in the CLA and nobody made such a contention. No comrade submitted a document on his point of view which was not presented to the membership for discussion and decision (for example, the Weber and Abern statements on the French turn, a statement on the same question by Oehler, another by Glee); an internal discussion and information bulletin was at the disposal of the membership; membership discussion meetings of the broadest and most democratic kind were provided for throughout the country and, in the city where the leadership exercised the greatest political and organizational influence—New York—discussion meetings of the membership were held almost week in and week out for a solid year, at which ***all*** comrades, with ***all*** points of view, had the most ample conceivable opportunity to debate their positions; a nationwide tour was organized in which a National Committee member (Shachtman) held membership discussion meetings with every single branch in the country for the purpose of presenting the NC position and discussing contrary positions, etc., etc. What, then, was the political basis upon which Abern-Weber-Glotzer organized a faction in the CLA?

It should be borne in mind, furthermore, that factions cannot, must not be organized because they ***agree*** with the basic political line of other factions, but because they ***disagree*** with those basic lines in so clear-cut a manner as to warrant the formation of a new group.

Now we have already seen that ***politically*** the Weber faction declared its agreement with Cannon and Shachtman on the policy pursued with regard to the fusion, i.e., with one of the two ***main and decisive*** questions before the League. When our motion to endorse the NC policy on the fusion and to reject Oehler's policy was defeated because the Weberites dared not offend their Oehlerite allies by a political characterization of their fusion position, it was nevertheless Weber who introduced the motion which endorsed "the main line of the NC in the course of the negotiations as basically correct and making possible the realization of the fusion." To add that Weber & Co. had this or that incidental criticism to make (and what else could it be but incidental?) of our conduct during the year in connection with the fusion question does not eliminate the decisive political fact that he was compelled to endorse our ***main line***; and what counts, or what should count with Bolshevik politicians, is precisely the ***main line***.

On the other of the two principal and decisive questions before the League, namely, the entry of the French comrades into the SFIO, documents and oral statements again attested to a political solidarity between the NC and the Weberites. Both took an identical position on what was decisive in the dispute: they endorsed the entry

of our French comrades as tactically correct, permissible from a principled standpoint, and both rejected the sterile yawpings of the international Bauerites.

Where, then, was the political difference of the Weberites with us that justified their formation of a separate faction?

If it is understood (and we shall prove it up to the hilt!) that the Weber group was not formed to fight for the French turn or against it; that it was not formed to fight for the fusion or against it; that it was formed in the dark of night without a political platform and without *ever*, in the two whole years of its existence, having drawn up a clear political platform; that its basis of existence is that of an unprincipled personal combination, of a clique that refuses to live down ancient and completely outlived personal and factional animosities; that its principal aim is to "smash Cannon" (and Shachtman, because of his association with the latter) without at the same time having the political courage to take over the responsibilities of leadership—if those things are understood, it becomes clear why, even without political differences, the Weberites came to the CLA convention with a faction and—O God help us!—with a "platform" on which to justify their politico-organizational existence.

And what was this "political platform?" Nothing more and nothing less than..."organic unity." A more wretched (and at the same time thoroughly false) cloak for the organization of an unprincipled clique could hardly have been chosen. This document has no intention of developing into a treatise on the general question of "organic unity," or even on "organic unity" insofar as it affected or affects the present situation in France. It deals with the question only to the extent required to cast some light on an otherwise unclear side of the matters under consideration.

One of the arguments advanced by those favoring entry into the SFIO was this: the movement for organic unity of the Stalinist and socialist parties has taken on serious proportions; the organic unity party can only be a reactionary party under the aegis of Stalinist ideology; in the process of effecting the organic unity of the two parties into one, the question of the program for the new party will be advanced; the Bolshevik-Leninists, on the outside looking in, will be unable to influence the direction which the workers, thinking of the new program, will take; as a constituent part of one of the parties (the SFIO), the Bolshevik-Leninists will be able to advance their revolutionary Marxian position as the programmatic base for the new party—not the new party of the Stalinist-social democratic "organic unity," but the new revolutionary party that will be constituted in the course of the regroupment of forces.

So strong was the "organic unity" wave in France, that some of the Bolshevik-Leninists were swept away by it. They took an uncritical attitude towards it. In the early days of the discussion on the question of entry (and even later), some of our comrades took the inadmissable position of becoming ***advocates*** of the slogan, thus making themselves, willy-nilly, the objective assistants of the dupery planned by the old-line leaders. Some (notably Molinier, as per his article in the *New International* for July 1934) replied to the question—"Organic unity?"—with the simple, enthusiastic affirmation: "Yes!"

Neither the French Ligue nor Comrade Trotsky ever advanced such a position, despite the assertion of the Oehlerites, who condemned this untaken position, or the Weberites, who approved this untaken position. In a criticism of some of the youth comrades who also picked up this reactionary slogan—the essence of which is and cannot but be, both theoretically and concretely in the minds of the masses, a sloganized affirmation of the possibility of reformism and Bolshevism coexisting in one party—Comrade Trotsky wrote [Summer 1934]:

> The aim of this text: to correct the slogan of organic unity, which is not our slogan. The formula of organic unity—without a program, without concretization—is hollow. And as physical nature abhors a vacuum, this formula fills itself with an increasingly ambiguous and even reactionary content. All the leaders of the Socialist Party, beginning with Just and Marceau Pivert and ending with Frossard, declare themselves partisans of organic unity. The most fervent protagonist of this slogan is Lebas, whose anti-revolutionary tendencies are well enough known. The Communist leaders are manipulating the same slogan with increasing willingness. Is it our task to help them amuse the workers by an enticing and hollow formula?
>
> The exchange of open letters of the two leaderships on the program of action is the promising beginning of a discussion on the aims and the methods of the workers' party. It is here that we should intervene vigorously. Unity like split are two methods subordinated to program and political tasks. The discussion having happily begun, we should tactfully destroy the illusory hopes in organic unity as a panacea. Our thesis: the unity of the working class can be realized only on a revolutionary basis. This basis is our own program.
>
> If fusion takes place tomorrow between the two parties, we place ourselves on the basis of the united party in order to continue our work. In this case the fusion may have a progressive significance. But if we continue to sow the illusion that organic unity is of value as such—and it is thus that the masses understand this slogan and not as a more ample and more convenient audience for the Leninist agitators—we shall be doing nothing but making it easier for the two conjoined bureaucracies to present us, us

> Bolshevik-Leninists, to the masses as the great obstacle on the road of organic unity. In these conditions unity might well take place on our backs, and become a reactionary factor. We must never play with slogans which are not revolutionary by their own content but which can play a quite different role according to the political conjuncture, the relationship of forces, etc.... We are not afraid of organic unity. We state openly that the fusion ***may*** play a progressive role. But our own role is to point out to the masses the conditions under which this role would be genuinely progressive. In sum, we do not set ourselves against the current toward organic unity, which the two bureaucracies have already cornered. But while supporting ourselves on this current, which is honest among the masses, we introduce into it the critical note, the criterion of demarcation, programmatic definitions, etc.

The position of the majority of the NC of the CLA was formulated in the instructions to Cannon who was delegated to represent us at the 1934 plenum of the International Secretariat of the ICL:

> ...to oppose the standpoint that "organic unity" as such is a "progressive step," and that the Bolshevik-Leninists shall become the proponents of such a slogan. That in all conditions and with all developments that may take place in the ranks of the working class or in the bureaucracies of the two principal parties, the Bolshevik-Leninists shall under all circumstances point out the illusory and reactionary character of "organic unity" as such (even under present "French conditions") and emphasize instead unity on a revolutionary program and in a revolutionary party.

At whom was this sharp formulation directed? Not only at some of our French comrades who had made this slogan of bureaucratic dupery their own (a year and a half later, the logical conclusion of their error was manifested in the treachery of Molinier & Co.!) but at the American Weberites who took, if anything, an even falser position in the belief that...that was LD's position. At the CLA convention we were treated to learned and mocking disquisitions on our (!) conception of "organic unity as such" and informed that outside of Kant there was no such thing. But it is precisely against a metaphysical, uncritical, tail-endist subservience to organic unity "as such" that the NC majority was compelled to polemicize. Again let us refer to the documents.

In the statement in favor of the French turn already referred to, Weber wrote on August 20, 1934: "It is no accident that this in itself would indicate the progressive character of the move for organic unity." "This in itself" referred to the fact that "it is necessary to protect the vanguard by enlisting the support of the organizations of the working class." And the vanguard whom this "progressive organic unity" would protect was the French Bolshevik-Leninists and Comrade Trotsky, then being hounded by French reaction! Will Abern, Glotzer, Spector and Edwards, who voted for Weber's statement (it is reproduced in the October 1934 *Internal Bulletin* No. 17 of the CLA) kindly tell us where and how this "unaccidental" thing finally "indicated the progressive character of the move for organic unity"?

Further on, Weber wrote: "From our point of view it would seem that there is no other choice—that we must choose the progressive road of organic unity.... At present the interests of the French proletariat, of the French revolution, make mandatory ***that we hail the move for organic unity and put ourselves at its service.***" (My emphasis—MS)

That is precisely what we would not consent to do! We refused to join in the enthusiastic "hailing" of organic unity which was (and is) helping to deafen the French proletariat to the call of its class interests. We refused to join in putting the Bolsheviks "at the service" of this reactionary conspiracy of Blum-Thorez bureaucracy. If they are so inclined, will Weber, Abern, Glotzer, Spector, et al. tell us if they still hold to the position they voted for in August and September?

But, it will be said, the Weberites considered the move for organic unity progressive only because the Bolshevik-Leninists would be inside it fighting for a revolutionary Marxian program for this unity. Unfortunately, they do not even have this straw to grab hold of. Let us read the famous Abern motion, to be found in the same CLA *Internal Bulletin*, which endorsed the Weber exposition of the question and proceeded to enlarge upon it:

> Should a merger of organic unity between the Stalinist and Socialist Parties of France emerge as a result of the development of the present united front, Comrade Swabeck's conception (cf. his statement) that it must be the deliberate object of the French Left Opposition to engineer a split in this merged party in order thereby to achieve the new Communist Party of France, in case it should gain admittance into the French Socialist Party as a bloc, is wholly false. (Oh scoundrelly Swabeck!—MS) He thereby conceives our object in endeavoring to join the French SP in the narrowest sense of a maneuver and fails to realize properly the gigantic objective factors which impel a move in this direction, and further fails to realize the revolutionary potentialities for the Left Opposition in the event of such an organic unity.... It must be recognized that, despite Stalinism and the SP, the achievement of organic unity, after a period of united front action between the SP and CP, ***even if temporarily excluding the Bolshevik-Leninists, would be a progressive step at this stage, representing the healthy will of the masses for revolutionary unity.*** (My emphasis—MS)

Do Weber-Abern-Glotzer-Spector, who voted for the Abern statement too, still support this standpoint? Do they still think that this reactionary conspiracy of the two old bureaucracies, this organic unity of social patriotism, with the Marxists expelled, is a progressive step? Do they still think that now, with our youth and party

comrades expelled by Blum-Cachin, the "organic unity" would represent the "healthy will of the masses for revolutionary unity" (what sticky, liberal sentimentalism!)?

Do they still agree with the Glotzer amendment made in the name of their faction to the Cannon-Shachtman resolution on the French situation—made as late as December 1934: "The striving of our French League to bring about the regroupment of the militant workers in both parties as well as those outside these parties in a single revolutionary party through the gateway of 'organic unity' is a progressive step in the direction of the creation of the French party of the Fourth International"?

Do the most recent events in France confirm their prognoses and proposals, or ours? Do they still "hail" organic unity? Do they still put themselves "at its service"? Do they still propose to support as a progressive step the idea of forming the new party in France "through the gateway of 'organic unity'"? Or is it necessary, as we declared a year and a half ago, to denounce the reactionary conspiracy of "organic unity," as such, for what it is and "to emphasize instead unity on a revolutionary program and in a revolutionary party"?

* * * * *

To the extent, therefore, that "organic unity" was an "issue" in the CLA, the Weberites were, to put it with restraint, hopelessly muddled. But the plain truth of the matter is that it never was a real issue in the CLA. It was picked up and inflated by the Weberites in order to give them a "plank" for their platform of differences with us, in order to give them an ostensible basis for a separate faction. And conclusive evidence of how little the Weberites were really interested in the question one way or the other is supplied by this fact: At the pre-convention membership meeting in New York where resolutions were being voted on, Weber offered to withdraw entirely from the floor his resolution in favor of "organic unity" if we would consent to withdraw from our resolution the paragraph on the same subject quoted above in the instructions to delegate Cannon! Weber's resolution had served its purpose; he had formed his ludicrous "organic unity" faction on the basis of it and had gotten a quota of delegates from New York in the proportional representation provided for by the NC voting regulations.

As is the rule with us, we had a position, we argued for it, we put it to a vote and we were not prepared to dump it down the drain just because Weber, whose position had been battered to bits in the discussion, was ready to "forget all about it." How serious shall we say a politician is who, after fighting for three months in defense of a special position which distinguishes him from all others in the organization, ends up at the decisive moment, when positions are to be adopted (i.e., at the final voting), with a proposal to let the whole matter drop? And to let drop a matter which, in the course of the whole year of 1934, constituted the ***one and only*** point of ***political*** difference, anywhere recorded in the organization, between the Weberites and ourselves!

Anywhere recorded in the organization, we repeat. For, though the Weberites differed with us in their whole conception of the fusion, as we have showed, and were wrong on the question, they nevertheless recorded themselves finally in endorsement of our "main line." Their only recorded ***political*** difference with us was on "organic unity" and this constituted the ***ostensible political*** basis for organizing their faction. What the ***real*** basis for the faction was, and what led it ever deeper into the morass of clique politics and combinationism, we shall see presently. For the moment, however, let us proceed to the CLA convention itself.

Blocs and Blocs: What Happened at the CLA Convention

The division at the CLA convention was as follows: The Oehlerites had 10 regularly elected delegates, organized long before the convention as a tight faction. The Weberites, also with a faction of long standing, had 13 delegates. National Committee supporters amounted to 17. Two unaffiliated delegates completed the total of 42 voting delegates. In their efforts to put us in a minority without themselves taking the responsibilities of a majority (that would be too much of a burden for people who must travel light!), the Weberites overreached themselves.

The small Davenport branch—which had been organized on the twin slogans "Up with organic unity! Down with Cannon!"—carved a niche for itself in communist history by sending a blank credential to be filled in by the Weber caucus! When this—shall we say, unusual?—procedure was challenged, the caucus leaders hastily wired Davenport which promptly wired back that what the blank space was supposed to represent was the Weberite, Comrade Ruskin—a not entirely groundless supposition. Carried away though they were by their position as a majority in combination with the Oehlerites and against us, the Weberites nevertheless bethought themselves that this was too raw and they themselves withdrew the Davenport credential. The same held true of another "delegate," Papcun, a young militant whom they rendered virtually useless to the movement by systematically poisoning him with their methods and practices. Papcun came to the convention with a forged credential. When it was exposed by us, the Weberites, Papcun included, shamefacedly withdrew his credential and declined to contest our challenge of his right to vote.

The control commission elected to look into Papcun's action reported the "decision of the commission that Comrade Papcun be censured for credential irregularity." For that proposal, too, the Weberites were compelled to vote, as did every other delegate to the convention. In revenge for our communist action on their two fraudulent delegates—actions they were compelled to support—they joined with the Oehlerites to unseat a delegate regularly credentialed by the San Francisco branch, who had committed the crime, not of forging a credential, but of supporting the NC!

This disgraceful overture to the convention had its counterpart at the final session in an episode which, while not edifying, throws a glaring, merciless light on those unprincipled combinationist practices that have characterized the course of the Weber caucus ever since that time.

Not being anarchists, bohemians, sewing circle habitués or syndicalists, we lay great store by the question of leadership. Without a leadership, the revolutionary movement is headless. With a bad leadership, it is in just as fatal a position. A revolutionary leadership is not created overnight. It is constituted in the course of years; it grows and learns and is tested in the course of political struggles—on the arena of its own organization and in the broader theater of the class struggle. In an even higher sense than the cadre as a whole, the leadership is the product of a selection made jointly by events in general and in particular by those it leads. While the Leninist conception provides for the steady introduction into the leadership of new and fresh elements and the sloughing off of decayed elements from the leadership—contrary to the American syndicalist who rules that a man can occupy an official position for only one term— Lenin stresses the idea of the continuity of leadership, so that it may become trained and experienced in the tremendous and exceedingly difficult task of leading the movement of the proletarian revolution.

The Lenin view has nothing but scorn for amateurish prejudices and "democratic" panderings to "rank and file-ism" or for the hypocritical coyness of those "reluctant" and "modest" gentry who are eager to be coaxed into the responsibilities of leadership. It has proper respect for those who insist on the Bolshevik idea of leadership, who, having a firm political line, fight for this line and for a leadership qualified to execute it. The Stalinist practice of "making" a leader overnight has nothing in common with Lenin. Neither has the Stalinist practice of "unmaking" leaders overnight. Although, it should be added, the kind of "leaders" produced in that school are, after all, just as easily unmade as they are made.

A party without a firm majority in its leadership, following a consistent political course, especially in a situation where there are clearly two basically different lines counterposed to each other in the organization, is a ship without sail or rudder, torn and tossed about by every wind that strikes it. The same holds true of the highest authority of a party—its national convention. It is the shortest irresponsibility to hold a convention of the revolutionary organization at a time when it must decide upon basic questions of far-reaching significance and when two irreconcilable views on these questions exist in the convention, without seeking to establish a firm majority for one basic view as against the other. Unless this is done, you court the risk of having the questions involved settled by chance, by accidental combinations.

The problem of giving direction to a convention does not end, naturally, with the adoption of formal resolutions; it ends with the selection of a leadership standing on those resolutions and qualified to execute them in life. The CLA convention was faced with two questions of vital importance, on both of which two distinctly different tendencies were manifested. One question (the so-called French turn) involved either the organizational and political rupture of our League with the world movement for the Fourth International (specifically, the ICL) or continued political solidarity with it. The other question (fusion with the AWP) involved either laying the ground for a speedy disruption of the fusion, of the new party, or the consummation of the fusion on a proper and healthy basis. In both cases the Oehler faction represented the former tendency, and we the latter.

Faced with the anomaly of this ***political*** situation and a division of the delegates to the convention which did not correspond to it ***organizationally***, it was the duty of the NC to make efforts to solve the difficulty. At the very outset of the convention, therefore, we called a private conference with the entire Chicago delegation and proposed to them the formation of a political bloc which would establish a majority in the convention, thereby giving it the indispensable political direction, and which would jointly select the new leadership to represent the CLA contingent in the fused party. Our ***opinion*** of the unprincipled origin and conduct of the Weberites did not, it goes without saying, alter the following ***facts***: 1) they represented a measurable group of delegates in the convention and consequently among the membership, whose existence had to be taken into consideration; 2) they ***asserted*** their political solidarity with the NC on the two decisive political questions before the CLA. These objective facts entirely warranted the formation of the bloc which we proposed, because of the simple reason that it would

be ***principled***. Whatever minor differences might exist between the two component parts of the bloc, and especially organizational differences, could and should be decided within the bloc, which had a common basis in principled agreement.

"It was revealed in the discussion at the CLA convention that the Cannon group had proposed a bloc to Oehler in order to fight the Weber group with whom they were in supposed political agreement," writes Glotzer in his November 20, 1935, letter to the I.S. of the ICL.

If this were the case, then our proposal to the Chicago Weberites would indeed stand exposed as a shabby, unprincipled maneuver on our part to establish a majority at any cost and with any body. But Glotzer's assertion is simply—to use a long word where a shorter one would sound better—a falsehood and a deliberate one. Like every delegate and visitor to our convention, Glotzer knows that while the highly "principled" Oehlerite J. Gordon, and one or two others, did approach Cannon and Shachtman with the proposal to form a bloc for the purpose of keeping Weber off the new National Committee, Cannon and Shachtman and their whole group promptly and categorically rejected any idea of any sort of bloc with a faction with whom they were in absolutely no principled solidarity whatsoever. If the fantastic bloc about which Glotzer speaks did not come into existence, it was not because of the reluctance of the Oehlerites—quite the contrary!—but because of our unhesitating rejection of it. What purpose does Glotzer think to serve with this stupid invention? The purpose of muddying things up and of covering up the actual, verifiable facts about what took place.

Now, what was the reaction of the Chicago statesmen to our proposal for a bloc? They rejected it out of hand! Because they disagreed with our main political line on the main political questions? No, as has already been shown by documents, they endorsed it. Because they disagreed with the continuation of the same majority in the leadership, and proposed that a new majority, a new leadership should be elected? No, not even that! Difficult as it is to believe about these people who, both then and now, inveigh so violently against the "Cannon-Shachtman leadership," they not only insisted that the subcommittee of Cannon and Shachtman should continue with the final official negotiations with the AWP (without the slightest proposal to change the composition of this subcommittee, which, according to Gould, did such an "opportunistic" job of it), but they protested their firm intention to vote, at the end of our convention, for a new National Committee in which the old NC majority (the same scoundrels, Cannon and Shachtman) would continue to have a majority. We thus have the following indisputable political facts—not inventions, but facts:

1. The Weberites did not challenge our main line with regard to the fusion; on the contrary, they endorsed it.

2. The Weberites did not challenge our main line with regard to the "entry" in France; on the contrary, they endorsed it.

3. The Weberites did not even contest our leadership of the CLA; despite this sniping criticism and that one, they insisted that we continue to predominate in the leadership.

What would a Bolshevik politician conclude from these facts? If you intend to vote for a leadership to continue in office; if you have no intention of replacing that leadership with one of your own; if, in other words, despite minor criticism, you insist that a certain group continue to take the ***political and organizational responsibility*** for the party's leadership, it is your political duty to solidarize yourself politically with that group, with that leadership, and to defend it from the attacks of another group with which you are ***fundamentally*** in disagreement (in this case, the Oehler group). If you do not fight for the leadership yourself (and we insisted in our conference with them that if they do not support us, then they should themselves take over the responsibility of leadership), it is your political duty to make a bloc with that group and the leadership for which you are going to vote in order to establish a firm political majority in a convention where the relationship of forces threatens to have questions settled by chance. But we said this is what a Bolshevik politician would conclude. The Weberites came to an opposite conclusion.

An opposite conclusion because they were (as they still are) animated not by political and principled considerations, but by pettifogging personal antipathies, by the yearning to revenge old, outlived, unimportant scores, by fear of tying themselves down politically in such a way as to interfere with their desire to fish around for unprincipled combinations in every direction.

The bloc with us was clearly indicated by the situation: by political agreement, by agreement on decisive leadership, and by the anomalous relationship of forces at the convention. But the Weberites would not take the step that was clearly indicated. They were interested in "taking a crack" at the outgoing NC majority for its "organizational methods" and its "delinquencies," and in getting J. Weber elected to the incoming NC.

So far as the latter point was concerned, we stood firmly opposed to putting Weber on the NC for the two good reasons that (1) in the preceding six months in particular he had more than sufficiently demonstrated his political irresponsibility, lack of seriousness and balance, and (2) we saw no reason why the convention should put

a premium on the kind of clique politics which, especially to the New York comrades, Weber symbolized. That our opposition to Weber was not aimed to "disfranchise" a "political tendency," as some would try to claim, is evidenced by the fact that we proposed that Satir and Glotzer, or any two chosen from their ranks by the Chicago delegation, should be placed on the incoming NC; and by the fact, further, that it was Shachtman who insisted that Glotzer stand as candidate for the NC when the latter sought to decline when nominated. (And, let it be added parenthetically for the benefit of those who have been victims of the Weber caucus lie-factory story that we kept Abern off the NC. Abern had not only announced months before the convention that he would not accept being on the next NC, but not all the efforts of his caucus colleagues at the convention could prevail upon him to take up the responsibilities devolving upon any NC member; he did not choose to run.)

So far as the first point is concerned, there were, beyond any dispute, more than enough grounds for complaint against the manner in which the outgoing NC of the CLA had functioned. It was far from a model of efficiency. But for members of the NC like Glotzer, Edwards, Abern and Spector to lead the "fight" against the "Cannon-Shachtman-Swabeck NC" was nothing more or less than brazen impudence. So far as the actual functioning of the old NC was concerned, it was confined exclusively to the three members whose "regime" the Weberites tried to make their target, with the possible addition of Oehler, who at least took his share of the responsibility for the organizational work of the League and did not retire to his tent to sulk. The whole burden of the League's work, conducted under the greatest of handicaps, and the whole burden of the League's political line fell upon the shoulders of the three comrades named.

If they did not discharge themselves of their tasks in an exemplary manner, they were nevertheless the ***only*** ones who did carry out the responsibilities of leadership: the work of administration, of editing the periodicals, of doing the writing, speaking and touring for the League, of representing it publicly and defending its line in the working class, of laying down the political line (and a correct one!) of the League on the decisive questions facing it. And this was done under the "terrible regime" of the three comrades without the slightest assistance from Spector, who left his responsibilities in the Resident Committee to return to Canada; from Glotzer, who also left his responsibilities in the Resident Committee to return to Chicago; from Edwards, who never came to New York, it is true, but who was systematically passive in the Chicago organization; from Abern, who absented himself from committee meetings for months at a time and who took over the management of the theoretical organ only after he had literally been beseeched for months to take over some responsible post.

The whole Weberite attack on the "regime" was exploded into thin air when we presented our resolution on the organizational report of the NC. In this document, which we do not hesitate to call a model of revolutionary self-criticism, the ***actualities*** of the situation in the leadership were presented to the membership in so trenchant and incontrovertible a manner that, minority though our group was in the convention, the resolution was adopted by a majority vote. Not only for its intrinsic value, but because of the true and revealing picture it gives of the situation in the CLA leadership and ranks, we reproduce the full text of the resolution as an appendix to this document.

And now back to the question of the "blocs." We refused to make a bloc with the Oehlerites because we had no political agreement with them. The Weberites refused to make a bloc with us although they did have political agreement with us. But we do not imagine that their refusal was based on any opposition to blocs "as such." Just as we and Marxists in general argue that any bloc is good if it has a common political basis, even, as Trotsky once put it, a "bloc with a Sancho Panza" like Kamenev, so the Weberites argue that any bloc is good if it has a common basis of opposition to Cannon-Shachtman and their "organizational methods." So that at the end of the convention, after having voted together with the Oehlerites on one organizational point after another, even to the extent of supporting Stamm's resolution on the NC organizational report, ***the Weberites finally consummated a formal bloc with the Oehlerites against us!***

Time and again the Weberites have of course sought to deny this fact, which we made so uncomfortable for them. When they do not deny it, they try to pass it off blandly as a trifle, as a matter of course, as something that causes them honest puzzlement when it is attacked. "It is also stated," writes Glotzer in the aforementioned letter to the I.S., "that the Weber group made a bloc with the Oehler group at that time. The bloc consisted in this: Oehler's agreement to vote for Weber as a member of the NC and the rights of all viewpoints to be represented on the NC." So far as the second point in this unprincipled pact was concerned, there was never any ground for it, for nobody challenged the right referred to. We had made adequate provisions in our NC slate for representation for both the Weber and Oehler groups. The basis for the bloc was simply a cheap horse-trade in which the Weberites pledged themselves ***to vote for Stamm*** on the NC in return for the Oehlerite pledge ***to vote for Weber*** on the NC.

This piece of unprincipled vote-swapping was officially endorsed by the two caucuses, and formally arranged by MacDonald, the Weberite fraternal delegate from Canada, who acted as intermediary in the negotiations for the bloc and who, in general, played, to put it bluntly, a shabby and not very glorious role in the whole miserable business. Just how putrid the deal really was may be seen from the CLA convention minutes, which we quote hereafter.

On the first vote, the following ten were declared elected to the National Committee: Cannon (42 votes, unanimous), Shachtman (42), Oehler (42), Skoglund (41), Swabeck (41), Dunne (40), Satir (39), Lewit (26), Sam Gordon (23), Stamm (23). Glotzer, Giganti and Weber, with 22 votes each, were tied for the eleventh place. What had happened? The 13 Weberites, loyal to the bargain, had joined with the 10 Oehlerites to elect Stamm. But the Oehlerites did not stay so loyal: one of their ten, out of spite against Weber, voted instead for Sam Gordon, thus electing him and...double-crossing the Oehlerite ally, Weber! The honest indignation of the Weberites knew no bounds. How could people be so dirty! The convention minutes then read:

> Chairman proposed that the three names (i.e., Glotzer, Giganti, Weber) be placed before the convention for voting. Comrade MacDonald of Canada objected to procedure, stated that it was clear that the results of the election did not represent the wishes of the majority (!!) of the convention and proposed re-opening of nominations and elections.... Proposal by Oehler that the Weber group should choose which of the three tied nominees should be a member of the NC. Objection by Cannon—proposal that the three should be voted on. Accepted by MacDonald.

In the discussion that followed, lasting through the night, we hammered away so powerfully at this unprincipled bloc that the majority was finally broken! Kotz, until then affiliated with the Weber group, could not stomach the deal; nor could Morgenstern, till that point a supporter of the Oehlerites; Weiss, another Weberite, finally decided to abstain. When the vote was finally cast, it stood: Glotzer 21, Weber 20, and 1 abstention. In the voting for the alternates, however, the shattered bloc rallied somewhat, with the result that Weberites and Oehlerites together made Basky the first alternate and Weber the second.

What were the political basis, the essence, and the lesson of the bloc? It should be emphasized that this must be understood not only in order to realize what happened at the CLA convention, which is of comparatively remote importance, but to realize the political character of the groupings now appearing before our second national convention.

1. The Oehlerites denounced the Weberites as representing the ***right wing*** of the CLA; Oehler declared he had ***nothing at all*** in common, politically, with Weber; if anything, said Oehler, he had more in common with us, presumably because of our position on "organic unity" with which he agreed; finally, the Oehlerites had proposed to us a bloc against Weber.

2. The Weberites denounced the Oehlerites as representing ***ultraleft sectarianism*** in the CLA; Weber declared, as he still does, we take it, that he had nothing at all in common, politically, with Oehler, and everything in common with us, except for the secondary point on "organic unity"; finally, the Weberites insisted that we retain the leadership of the organization.

Is it permissible, then, for the right and the ultraleft to form a bloc—oh, not a very big one, of course, just a little organizational bloc—against, let us assume for a moment, the "center"? In our opinion, and in the opinion of every Marxist who stands on principled grounds, it is impermissible! But it will be said—and it was said in greater detail later on, in the WP—they both had organizational differences with the "center" and the bloc was "only" on an organizational question; they both disagreed with the "organizational methods" of Cannon-Shachtman, and that consideration justified the bloc. The argument is fundamentally reactionary. Let us see what the established Marxian view is on this question.

In 1928-1929, the Bukharinist right wing broke with the Stalinist center and started secret negotiations for a "little organizational" bloc with Left Oppositionist elements in order jointly to combat the detestable organizational methods of Stalin. ***Politically***, the right had much in common with Stalin and nothing in common with the left; politically, the left has much in common with Stalin (at that junction) and nothing in common with the right; both right and left, however, had, or seemed to have, something in common "organizationally" against Stalin. Here is what Trotsky wrote at that time concerning the bloc proffered by Bukharin & Co.:

> Shall we make a bloc with the right wing to revenge ourselves upon the Stalinists, for their rudeness, their disloyalty, their expulsions and abuse of loyal revolutionists, for Article 58, for the "Wrangel officer"? No, we the principled Bolshevik-Leninists can never make a bloc with the right wing against the centrists. On the contrary, insofar as the centrists fight the right wing we support them, while criticizing their half-heartedness and putting forth our own line. Blocs between the right and the left have been made in other revolutions, but they have also ruined these revolutions. ("Appeal to the Sixth Congress of the Comintern" [12 July 1928])

And again, in his polemic shortly afterward against the leader of the German Left Opposition, Urbahns, who proposed a "little organizational bloc" with the

right-wing Brandlerites against the Stalinists, Trotsky wrote:

> How can factional collaboration with the right wing, who adopt an opposite principled position, bring the left closer to the conquest of the party? It is clear that the only thing that could be produced here is an organizational combination which breaks into the principled position. A group could enter into such a combination only if it strives and hastens to adopt a place in the party which absolutely does not correspond to its ideological-political strength. (Note that well, Weber!—MS) But this is the road to suicide and nothing else. I have more than once been forced to observe that political impatience becomes the source of opportunistic policy.... The factional mechanics of the struggle must never stand above its principled content, even if only for a single hour.

Finally, writing about the case of Mill, who had also made a "little organizational bloc"—just a temporary one!—with a group in the French Left Opposition which he had defined as non-Marxist, against another group which, although he called it Marxist, was charged by him with having bad "organizational methods"—Mill, who logically concluded this political practice by passing over to the Stalinists, Trotsky summarized the situation in a letter written October 13, 1932:

> For Mill, principles are in general clearly of no importance; personal considerations, sympathies and antipathies, determine his political conduct to a greater degree than principles and ideas. The fact that Mill could propose a bloc with a man whom he had defined as non-Marxist against comrades whom he had held to be Marxists showed clearly that Mill was politically and morally unreliable and that he was incapable of keeping his loyalty to the flag. If he betrayed on that day on a small scale, he was capable of betraying tomorrow on a larger scale. That was the conclusion which every revolutionist should have drawn then.

Is it any wonder, therefore, that we who had been taught for years in the school of Lenin and Trotsky to shun and combat the kind of politics described so bitingly by the above quotations should have fought so bitterly against the unprincipled Weber-Oehler bloc at the CLA convention? What was decisive with us was not the question of one more or one less "opponent" on the NC the majority of which was already conceded us. What was decisive was the necessity of ***smashing this conception of politics*** as soon as it showed its ugly head, of preventing such poison from entering the system of our organization, of educating the membership to detest unprincipled combinationism and clique maneuvers and of teaching it how to struggle against them, even on a small scale, so that when our revolutionists face such practices on a bigger scale in the class struggle, they will more effectively be able to deal them mortal blows.

One need not go to quotations from Trotsky. Picture a situation in a trade union which is led by a more or less "progressive" leadership which carries on reprehensible organizational machinations against the extreme right as well as against the revolutionary left wing of the union. Such situations have existed and do exist in this and other countries—by the hundreds. Each from his own (i.e., from opposite) principled standpoint fights against the bureaucratic progressive administration which, while progressive in comparison with the right wing it has replaced, nevertheless resorts to bad "organizational methods" against both its opponents. (The Lovestone-Zimmerman administration of Local 22, striking at the extreme right and at the proletarian left at the same time, might serve as a good case in point.) Election time arrives. Neither the right nor the left is strong enough, by itself, to oust the administration. Is it conceivable for Marxists to agree under any conditions to an organizational bloc—be it even for one or two more members of the two oppositions on the incoming executive board—between the left and the right? For Marxists, no, no, no! The Stalinists have made such blocs and do make them today. But that's precisely why we denounce them as traitors to revolutionary principle.

We are not now even arguing whether or not Weber and Oehler were right in condemning our "organizational methods" or our "regime." We contend of course that they were wrong. But let us assume for a moment that there were grounds for their condemnation of us. Even in that case, the bloc was absolutely impermissible. The Weberites, had they been principled politicians, would have had to say: The organizational methods and regime of Cannon and Shachtman are indubitably bad. Furthermore, by their false position on "organic unity" they are able to fight the Oehlerites only half-heartedly and half-successfully. Yet on the decisive political questions, we agree with the main line of C-S, and with the main line of their fight against the ultraleft sectarians, international splitters, the anti-Trotskyists, that is, the Oehlerites. We must therefore ally ourselves at every point with the NC which is fighting the menace of Oehlerism; if it is weak, we must strengthen it; under no circumstances, however, will we give the Oehlerites the slightest bit of comfort, either political or organizational. Our organizational differences with the NC majority we will settle—but within the sphere of our principled agreement with it, in our own way, and without allying ourselves for this purpose with those elements with whom we have nothing at all in common politically, with whom we are irreconcilable in principle.

Had this been the Weberite attitude, had they not been animated above all by the contemptible urge to get another vote on the NC even if they had to pay for it by voting for an opponent in principle (and ending

by being double-crossed!), their line might have been clear and would not have the stigma of unprincipledness branded upon it. They would have helped educate the party and youth comrades, and their own faction members to boot; they would have helped prepare the CLA comrades for the eventuality of a struggle against the anti-Trotskyists in the new party instead of preparing them to serve as shield-bearers for this reactionary tendency. They might have served as a progressive factor; they served instead as a retrogressive one, as an obstacle to the advance of the movement, as the mud in every clear stream.

Yet, it's an ill wind that blows nobody good. If the Weberites, by their shameful conduct at the CLA convention, contributed nothing positive to the movement, they at least created a situation which afforded us the concrete opportunity of drawing a living contrast between Marxian politics and unprincipled combinationism, between admissible blocs and inadmissible blocs, between revolutionary principle and clique intrigues. It is this contrast which facilitated the solution of the internal problem with which we were soon to be faced inside the united party.

The Workers Party Up To the June Plenum

The building of an effective political party, especially a revolutionary Marxian party, is hardly the simplest thing in the world, and unfortunately there are no cut-and-dried universal formulae which can be applied to every situation at every time. What we have to go by are the general experiences of the revolutionary movement; what we can always guide ourselves by is the good rule: base yourselves always on the tested and unassailable principles of Marxism, and after making a political analysis of each concrete situation, act politically; avoid rigid formalism, subjective considerations, personal combinations, old prejudices; allow for the aid which time and corroborating events will always bring to your political line. But above all, have a political line, based upon a political analysis of the situation or problem which is before you concretely.

With these general rules for building the party, we have been able to see more than a day ahead and to be prepared in advance accordingly. That too is why our organizational methods, so violently criticized by all our inner-party opponents, were not the product of caprice, of accident, of episodic contingency, but, on the contrary, the logical, thought-out product of a consistent political line.

The Weberites and Oehlerites in the CLA first broke their pick, in one sense, on abstract and formalistic comparisons in making their political analysis of the AWP. The CLA was a revolutionary Marxian group, they declared (and they were right), and the AWP was a typically centrist group (and they were wrong because that characterization was inadequate and consequently false). More than one Weberite, for example, wrote and said that the AWP and the S.A.P. of Germany [Socialist Workers Party of Germany] were identical, or, if any difference existed between the two, it was all in favor of the S.A.P. "who are far more developed, capable and intelligent than the Muste people, in fact, who are closer to us than the Musteites"—as Glotzer put it with his customary penetration and far-sightedness. On the Oehlerite side, this approach led to an antagonistic suspicion to the AWP, so intense that (and this in itself would be a sufficient mark of the sterility of the Oehlerites) when they finally broke from the party they had not won to their banner a single known ex-AWP member. On the Weberite side, this approach led to opposite results, in this sense at least: when they found out that the former AWPers were not the incorrigible centrists they had falsely labelled them, their astonishment was so great that—pushed on by their factional considerations as well—they tore off the old label, affixed exactly the opposite kind to Muste and fell all over themselves to make a bloc with him...against us!

Our analysis of the AWP was quite different from that of either of our CLA opponents. The AWP is a centrist organization, it is true, but an entirely unique one, with great revolutionary potentialities. Unlike, let us say, the S.A.P., it did not represent a long-established political movement steeped for years in social-democratic traditions, permeated by a rigid system of political ideas and dominated by an impervious, mossbacked bureaucracy. Far from it. Its centrism was of a fresh, vigorous, immature kind. It merely represented the temporary transitional phase of a movement from militant trade unionism and activism in the class struggle to a revolutionary political party. It was groping for its program and was distinctly receptive to Marxian influence. With the exception of a Salutsky or two, who represented confirmed Menshevism and systematic opposition to Marxism, but who were not authentically representative of the movement they temporarily headed or influenced, even the leadership of the AWP could not be mentioned in the same breath with the ossified centrists at the head of the S.A.P.

From this analysis we concluded that the forces contributed to the new party by the AWP could not and would not offer any fundamental, organized, political difficulty in the progress of the fusion. Salutsky-Hardman had been disposed of with ease, without either political or organizational convulsions, and this was very significant for the future, because if this trained

right-wing politician could do nothing even to begin to disrupt the fusion, then there was every reason to believe that the right-wing elements, confined essentially to scattered or confused individuals, would not constitute a serious problem inside the party.

They would not constitute a serious problem, that is, *if* the comrades of the CLA in particular conducted themselves in such a way as not to bring about a crystallization of the dispersed and isolated right-wing forces into a firm right-wing faction, with a worked-out platform and rallying center of its own. Our analysis of the situation led us to the conclusion that the right-wing elements in the AWP could become a danger to the new party only if irresponsible, formalistic ultraleft sectarians from the CLA were permitted to act so as to drive the right-wing elements together into a force. Only with the involuntary but nonetheless effective assistance of these sectarians could the right wing hope to keep alive and heighten the prejudices of many AWP militants against the fusion, against the "Trotskyists" and against "Trotskyism."

These ideas were not formed in our minds as a post-factum explanation of what happened in the internal disputes of the WP. We were prepared for these disputes, and prepared to hold the party together, precisely because these ideas were developed by us in advance. After pointing out that the years of training it had undergone had prepared the CLA cadre to act as a firm spinal column for the new party, the Shachtman-Cannon pre-convention thesis of the CLA warned, as far back as the fall of 1934:

> Nor is this analysis to mean that the League forces which contribute to the building of the new party can convert themselves into a caste of Brahmins, loftily deigning to confer their leadership upon a lower caste. Such an attitude would not only be despicable and unworthy of revolutionists, but would automatically guarantee the reduction of the new party movement to a hopeless sect. The heart of a movement must be an integral part of it—not something apart from it—working together harmoniously with all the other organs and parts of the movement, pumping blood throughout the whole organism and constantly receiving new blood. Otherwise the whole organism withers and dies. An attitude of communist priggishness or conceit, especially towards elements, groups, forces that may make up the ranks of the new party other than those coming from our League, would be equivalent to isolating our ideas from the ideas of the party, would be equivalent to facilitating the domination of non-communist ideas and elements in the party. We have no narrow factional interests or aims in the new party movement; of all the available forces, we are merely the most persistent, the most conscious and advanced, the most consistent element. We can make no greater contribution than this, nor do we need to.

At the same time, the NC majority was apprehensive about certain elements that the CLA would contribute to the fusion and warned against any religious attitude towards anybody in the new party just because we had once carried a membership card in the CLA: "This does not mean that any iron guarantees can be given for this cadre. Nor does it mean that the cadre is all that could be wished for, or all that is needed. The biggest tests of the cadre are still ahead. And secondly, its value is not absolute but relative."

This analysis dictated to us our course in the first period of the existence of the WP. We knew there were many in the ranks of the CLA—above all, Oehlerites—whose eyes gleamed at the thought of entering the new party for the purpose of ramming a course on "Bolshevization" à la Zinoviev down the throats of a lot of "damned centrists." We determined to set ourselves firmly against this thoroughly unhealthy tendency. For one reason and another, many of the best militants of the AWP were beset with apprehensions about the CLA contingent in the fusion, about what they thought to be (or had been mis-taught to think was) our exclusive preoccupation with everything in the world save the class struggle in the United States; our inability or unwillingness to participate in the daily life of the American proletariat; our predilection for endless discussion of obscure theoretical questions, of remote problems, of hairsplitting Talmudism. These and other prejudices had to be dispelled for two good reasons: firstly, they were without foundation insofar as they referred to the "Trotskyist" ***movement***, however well-based they may have been with regard to this or that individual or group in it; secondly, with these prejudices prevalent even in a section of the new party, it would be unable to function harmoniously and effectively, with mutual confidence among the ranks and the leadership.

Now, that was our political analysis, from which flowed our political line in the fused party, from which, in turn, flowed our "organizational methods." The three constituted a harmonious whole.

At the other end of the CLA stood the Oehler group. If its course is really to be understood, it must be explained politically. Otherwise, it will remain in the recollections of some comrades as some strange, incomprehensible, inexplicable phenomenon produced by psychological conditions or personal caprice. The political analysis of the Oehler group, to put it in a word, was that the WP was a centrist party. The political line of the Oehler group, in another word, was to recruit inside this party for their anti-Trotskyist faction and to split this faction from the party at the earliest moment. Its organizational methods flowed from this analysis and line, could

not but have flowed from them, and cannot be explained without them as their basis. Let us establish these assertions from the record and from other verifiable facts.

There can be little doubt now that if the CLA had not fused with the AWP the Oehler group, like the Bauerites in Germany and Lhuillierites in France, would have split away from the American section of the ICL to form an independent sect of their own. If they did not split from us before or during the CLA convention, it was only because they saw the opportunity of escaping the discipline of the ICL by joining the unaffiliated new party and continuing to work for their platform within its ranks. That is the only reason why, after we pressed them to the wall so relentlessly at the CLA convention, they pledged themselves to loyal collaboration with the ICL in the new party, pledged themselves to abide by the decisions of the plenum of the ICL which endorsed the French turn, and pledged themselves to dissolve their faction upon entering the new party.

All their pledges were merely a ruse, a disloyal stratagem. His real position was formulated by Oehler in the resolution he presented on the ICL plenum, stating that "the comrades in the SFIO have contrary to the resolution furled the banner of the Fourth International and raised the banner of organic unity. Let him who dares assert the contrary. By declaring for organic unity the comrades in the SFIO have given positive support to the social patriots of both parties. They have thereby assumed a share of the responsibility of the treachery which is in preparation. The plenum shares the responsibility of our French comrades."

In other words, Oehler gave the following political characterization of the forces remaining loyal to the ICL and its principles: they have furled the banner of the Fourth International; they are assistants of the social patriots and they share the responsibility for treason to the proletariat. Such elements, included among whom were Cannon and Shachtman, could not lead a revolutionary Marxian party except to new treacheries. Only the Oehlerites, by their activities inside the new party, could convert it from centrism to Marxism. "The unfinished work of ideological clarification and solidification of the force that must be the Marxian core of the new party," declared Stamm in his resolution at the CLA convention, "remains to be done and will have to be carried out inside the new party." But precisely because this work had not been done preliminary to founding the party, it was centrist, for, let us not forget, in the Oehlerite conception the new party is centrist if it has a "non-Marxian program through omissions." If further evidence is required from documents, it may be found in the fact that the Oehlerite J. Gordon voted in the New York District Committee to admit to party membership the four ex-Weisbordites who applied to the WP with the statement that they disagreed with our Declaration of Principles and considered the WP a centrist party!

It should further be remembered that included in the Oehlerite dogmas is the conception that a reformist or centrist party cannot be "reformed." Oehler's whole argument against the supporters of the French turn was based on this absurd contention. It is absolutely essential, he argued, to give any group we may send into a reformist or centrist party ***a split perspective in advance***. These stupidities can be found in any of the Oehlerite documents. But stupid or not is beside the point here. Important is the ***fact***: the Oehlerite "Marxist group" entered the "centrist" WP with the fundamental aim of splitting as large as possible a force from it to form the American section of the Oehlerite International. Especially confirmed in this line were the Oehlerites because of their conviction that the French turn supporters ***necessarily had to*** follow the same tactic in this country—say what they will, they would inevitably "liquidate the independent party" into the "stinking corpse of the Second International" in the United States. Finally, the Oehler doctrine declares that if revolutionary Marxists are in a non-Marxian party, they do not adhere to the discipline of the centrist or reformist leadership, but obey only their own "revolutionary discipline." The tactics, the policies, and above all the organizational methods pursued by the Oehlerites in the party, and especially in the internal fight, flowed from this political analysis and line—and could flow from no other. That is how we explained it for months and months in the recent period. No other ***political*** explanation for their conduct has been offered; none can be.

Virtually the day after the new party was formed, therefore, saw the beginning of Oehler's activities to finish "the unfinished work of ideological clarification and solidification." And these activities resulted in throwing the party into a frenzied fever, into one riot after another, into a hounding and persecution campaign which reproduced on a small scale all the evil sides of the notorious Zinovievist "Bolshevization" campaign of 1925.

Not satisfied with the clear-cut position taken on the Stalinist Kirov campaign by the significant joint editorial in the *New Militant* signed by Muste and Cannon, the Oehlerites (and—need we add?—the Weberites) demanded immediately a general membership meeting in New York. For what purpose? In order to "put the AWP leaders on the spot" on the "Russian question." That's what the Oehlerites were interested in.

At the very first meeting on the trade-union question, where concrete tasks of trade-union work were to be discussed, the Oehlerites made a concerted effort to change the trade-union line of the party—and that in a Zackian direction.

With hardly a month of existence behind the party, the Oehlerites began a savage campaign against Howe, the AWP representative in the editorship of the *New Militant*. In Philadelphia, the Oehlerites made a public attack, at a WP lecture, on the ex-AWPer Ludwig Lore, who was speaking from the party platform and as an official party speaker. In New York, Oehler and Stamm, at the membership meeting to discuss the Russian situation, violated the elementary discipline of the NC to which they belonged by making an open attack on the official NC reporter, Shachtman. (Again, need we add that Weber and Gould did the same thing at a subsequent meeting?) Demands were made for the immediate expulsion of Solon, also a former AWP member.

In the case of Budenz, the Oehlerites raised a hue and cry throughout the party about the terrible "right danger" which threatened to inundate the organization and sweep it into the swamp of reformism. In the case of the discussion of the language-branch question, the Oehlerites created another riot in the party, with Basky, a member of the NC (and—need we add?—Weber, who, member of the NC though he was, signed a round-robin attack on the NC position together with the Oehlerite Gordon in the New York DC), violating NC discipline by openly agitating in the ranks against its position. The famous "West resolution" of perspectives with regard to the SP was immediately taken out of the ranks of the PC which was discussing it, disloyally misrepresented and distorted beyond recognition by the Oehlerites, and another hue and cry raised against the "liquidators" in the leadership.

At every other meeting of the PC, Oehler and Stamm would appear with a new "thesis" to help "finish" the "unfinished work," and with a proposal for an immediate discussion to be arranged in the party on this "thesis." Time and again—with the party not yet three months old!—the Oehlerites in the PC demanded an internal discussion bulletin—not to discuss organizational problems of the party, problems arising out of the work of carrying out the tasks set down for the party by the fusion convention, but political questions properly belonging to a pre-convention period, and at that, questions which were not and could not be of primary importance to a party just attempting to organize and launch itself in the class struggle. And in order further to hamstring the party and its work, Oehler proposed a bare month after the party was formed (January 21) that "any member of the PC has a right to call for a roll-call vote of all NC members on any issue he considers of sufficient importance"—a proposal that would simply have paralyzed the PC and prevented it from carrying out a single decision with which Oehler did not happen to agree. A more utterly unrealistic and sectarian line for the party could hardly be imagined than the one pursued by Oehler & Co. prior to the Pittsburgh Plenum of the NC in March 1935.

The fact that the Oehlerite line and methods were good for absolutely nothing at all—except perhaps for the complete disruption of the fusion—is shown concretely in the reaction to them of all the former members of the AWP, and especially of the active militants. Far from accomplishing the "unfinished work of ideological clarification and solidification," the Oehlerites succeeded only in heightening all the apprehensions and prejudices that had ever existed in the minds of these militants. And what good are all the highfalutin and fine-sounding theories about the "imperative need of ideological clarification" on various problems if those you seek to "clarify" are repelled, react violently against you and are driven right into the arms of those you claim you are fighting—the right wing? If the antagonistic reaction to Oehlerism in New York during those early months, from Muste down to the humblest rank-and-filer of the old AWP, were not enough to bring the irresponsible sectarians to their senses, the identical reaction of all the serious field workers who came to the Pittsburgh Plenum should have accomplished that purpose. But it simply made no difference in the Oehlerite line. And that for the simple reason that, as experience shows, some sectarians are entirely hopeless, incorrigible.

The Pittsburgh Plenum took a firm and unequivocal position with regard to the Oehlerite line. On the unanimous decision of the full NC (against the votes of Oehler and Stamm, of course), Shachtman gave a detailed report on the situation to the Active Workers Conference assembled at the same time and which the Oehlerites, with the aid of their latest recruit, Zack, had tried to disrupt at the very opening session. The report represented, formally, the line of the Political Committee for the first three months of its existence. In a more direct sense, it represented also the line elaborated even before then and followed since by Cannon and Shachtman.

In it, Shachtman put forward the general conceptions outlined on previous pages of this document. The fused party represented a unity of two different streams. It was only at its inception. It is ridiculous to imagine that the unity is all accomplished by the mere fact of a unity convention. Its real unification and solidification can be effected only in the course of joint work and joint elaboration of policy, the prerequisite for which is the breaking down of old organizational barriers and mutual political and psychological suspicions, the establishment of mutual confidence, and above all the establishment of an atmosphere which makes possible effective joint work and joint elaboration of policy. The unity which we

worked so hard and carefully to establish can easily be disrupted, especially if anything is done to heighten the feeling, on one side, that the other is composed of windbags, hairsplitters and spittoon philosophers, and on the other side, that the first is composed of hard-boiled centrists and opportunists. Instead of sharpening and crystallizing prematurely and unnecessarily any divergent tendencies that may exist, it is imperative (***especially in view of the fact that both organizations had just gone through a solid year of internal discussion prior to the fusion!***) to plunge the party into concrete day-to-day work, to create a normal atmosphere instead of a superheated one, to make possible the assimilation of all assimilable elements and not to declare, a priori, that this, that or the other comrade is unassimilable and must have an "ideological campaign" launched against him.

The main core of the party leadership is sound, and it is essential to facilitate the collaboration of its ranks, precisely in order that it may be able, ***unitedly***, to deal with inimical and unabsorbable elements, and deal with them in such a way and at such a time as will not create the suspicion in anyone's mind that the leadership is out to chop off heads, or—to put it more plainly—that the ex-CLAers are out to "Bolshevize" the party overnight by lopping off—whether for good reasons or not—one AWP man after another. The party is not only very young, but in many sections very immature. It is stupid to approach every one of its internal problems as if it were a solid, long-established, "old-Bolshevik" party and to act accordingly. It is like a political baby, in many respects, and it must be nursed along through all the disorders of infant growth. Essentially, that is the way to cement the fusion under the concrete conditions obtaining at the time. The Oehler line, sectarian and factional, is the way to disrupt the fusion.

The cry of superior derision that went up from the super-Bolshevik ranks of the Oehlerites (and—need we add?—the Weberites) at the phrase "nurse the baby"! The very fact of their disdainful mockery of a formula whose political essence was unassailable revealed their utterly false estimate of our problem. They approached the WP, in which the unity was by no means firmly knit, with the same attitude as those other great Bolshevizers of the American Communist Party, under Pepper, about whom Trotsky wrote so tellingly that they had already armed the CP "from head to foot with all the attributes of 'revolutionary organization,' so that it looks like a six-year-old boy wearing his father's equipment."

The Pittsburgh Plenum of the NC adopted a resolution on the situation which endorsed the main line of the PC for the three months of its activity and rejected the Oehlerite line as "sectarian and factional." This resolution was not only supported by Muste and ourselves, but it represented our political and organizational line: hit at the sectarians as the greatest obstacle to the fusion and who threaten to crystallize a right wing in the party, and strengthen the collaboration between the two main forces in the fusion upon whom its unity and progress depended most of all, namely, Cannon and Shachtman of the CLA and Muste and his friends of the AWP.

The censure of the Oehlerites adopted at Pittsburgh did not, however, cause them to suspend their ultra-factional activities. Rendered desperate by this first, mild warning, the Oehlerites merely intensified their attacks upon the party line and the party leadership. Immediately after the Pittsburgh Plenum they launched a new hysteria campaign against the "right danger." "The Budenz article," reads a statement by Stamm-Basky-Oehler to the PC on April 22, "published before the Plenum and the fact that several leading comrades—Howe, Johnson, Truax—have identified themselves with the ideas advocated in this article since the Plenum, indicating that a number of comrades in the ranks of the party also support these ideas, prove that contrary to the Pittsburgh Plenum resolution a danger from the right exists in the party.... The PC should now change its course. It should declare that the danger to the party comes from the right. It should wage an ideological struggle in the party against the Budenz platform."

Again, in accordance with our line, the PC rejected this estimate, and reaffirmed ours, namely, that the principal danger to the party emanated from the ultra-left sectarians. Were we correct or was Oehler? It would be sufficient answer to refer to the fact that two months later, at the June Plenum, Oehler did not so much as mention the "right danger" which, as late as the end of May, he had been rabble-rousing the party against. An even more effective answer and a confirmation of the entire correctness of our evaluation is contained, however, in the results themselves. We said that while there were right elements, they constituted no particularly acute danger; that the party, by proceeding intelligently and not hysterically, would isolate the individual right-wingers and eliminate them ***without a convulsion in the party***, without a party crisis.

And that is precisely what happened. The party was able to slough off unassimilable elements who had formerly been outstanding leaders of the AWP, and enjoyed the esteem and warm support of the AWP ranks, not only without causing a crisis in the party, but without losing any of the party's ranks to these right-wing figures. Budenz went over to Stalinism, but our policy prevented him from taking along a single member. Howe dropped out entirely, but he dropped out alone. Lore was

expelled, but nobody went away with him. Solon and Calverton disappeared from the party horizon, but it never caused a ripple in our ranks. Breier resigned from the party, but nobody, either in Allentown or Pittsburgh, followed him out of the organization.

Aren't these *facts* a crushing refutation of the Oehlerite hysteria and the Oehlerite line, as well as a complete confirmation of the correctness of the analysis we made and the course we based upon it? These *facts* show what our political line and our organizational methods with regard to the right-wing elements looked like in reality and what they achieved for the party. Now let us see what the *facts* show about our line and methods with regard to the ultraleftists in the party.

The sectarians, we contended, constitute, at the present junction, the principal danger to the party, the greatest obstacle to its normal, healthy progress. Their association, even in the last period of the CLA, with an international clique of splitters, of reactionary anti-Trotskyists, convinced us from the very beginning that, *if they were to continue their line in the new party*, we would inevitably come to an organizational parting of the ways with them. Does this mean that we had established, in advance, an expulsion policy towards the Oehlerites and that we were merely waiting for a "pretext" on which to expel them? Or does it mean that we were wrong in having failed to expel them in the CLA rather than permit them to enter as a disruptive force into the composition of the new party? Neither one is correct, and for the following three reasons:

1. Under our pressure, the Oehlerites pledged themselves at the CLA convention to remain loyal to the decisions of the convention, and to conduct themselves in a loyal manner inside the new party.

2. Even if we had considered it correct to refuse to take this political declaration at its face value, it would have been impossible at that time to convince the comrades of the AWP that the Oehlerites should not be admitted into the new party; it would have been wrong to hold up the fusion until the AWP was made fully acquainted with all the details of the struggle that had gone on in the CLA with the Oehlerites, first, because with regard to the fusion the question was settled; second, because with regard to the French turn the question was not before the new party and it would have been the height of political unreality to demand a position on this question before we would consent to fusion; finally, it was necessary—assuming the continuation of the Oehlerite line in the new party—to permit the AWP comrades to draw the conclusions about Oehlerism from their own experience with it, instead of attempting, in advance, to impose upon the AWP the conclusions we had drawn about Oehler from *our* experience.

3. Finally, since it is not always true that once a sectarian always a sectarian, we had to take into account the possibility that joint work in the new party, a new attempt at comradely collaboration and common working out of the political line of the party, would bring the Oehlerites to a change in their line. Just because we did not have an *a priori* expulsion policy with regard to Oehler & Co., we made it possible for him to enter the new party on an equal basis with all others, with equal opportunities for work and collaboration, unprejudiced by his position in the CLA. At the same time we did not intend to relax our vigilance against the first manifestations of their sectarian line. Create the conditions that will facilitate their absorption into the mainstream of the party, give them posts and responsibilities, but demand of them, in addition to these rights, the obligation of every other party member, namely, submission to general party discipline.

That is exactly what we thought in theory and exactly what we carried out in practice. No attacks were levelled at Oehler, Stamm and Basky after the new party had come into existence. We immediately proposed that Oehler take over the highly important work of special organizer in southern Illinois, a strategic field from the standpoint of our trade-union work and work among the unemployed. Oehler demurred because he wanted to remain in the center to direct the activities of his faction in completing the "unfinished work"; he insisted on becoming educational director of the party. We acquiesced to his proposal. Stamm, whom we proposed as manager of the *New International*, also objected to this post and demanded that he be placed in the work of the NPLD [Non-Partisan Labor Defense]. Here too we considered our proposal the more correct one, but in the interest of obtaining the maximum collaboration of all elements, we finally acquiesced to Stamm's proposal also, and assigned him to defense work. Basky we placed in charge of the work in the foreign-language field. Other "leftists" were dealt with in the same manner.

It was Cannon who proposed that Zack be assigned to the post of special trade-union organizer in New York, so that the party might fully utilize the contacts among the independent unionists which Zack claimed to have. It was Cannon who proposed, further, that Williamson, another Oehlerite, be assigned as a special organizer among the New York Negroes. Zack had an eastern tour of the party arranged for him. In a word, every effort was made by us to facilitate honest collaboration with the ultraleftists, to make possible their assimilation into the normal life of the party. In face of all these facts, the story about our deep-dyed plot to "get" the "left wing" from the very beginning belongs in the realm of fiction and fancy, and not of reality.

This deliberate policy of ours, however, was evidently interpreted by the Oehlerites as a sign of weakness. The series of riots organized by them, especially in New York, which culminated in the shameless attempt to disrupt and disorganize the Active Workers Conference in Pittsburgh—even that did not encounter any severe action on our part. All we proposed at the Pittsburgh Plenum was a censure of their factionalism and a characterization of their sectarianism. No measures were proposed or taken against them, although they were richly deserved. The motion adopted in March was intended as a second warning to the Oehlerites—the first had been given them at the CLA convention—against a continuation of their sterile, disruptive course. We continued to hope that, with the overwhelming majority of the party obviously against them, the Oehlerites might be convinced of the injuriousness of their course and that, while continuing to grant them every right to present their special point of view on any question in normal party ways, we would not be compelled to proceed against them with organizational actions.

Our hopes to steer the party through the sectarian danger without sharp measures were dashed by the intensified factionalism of the Oehlerites following the Pittsburgh Plenum, culminating in their actions in connection with the Zack case. These actions finally convinced us that the Oehlerites had embarked upon a desperate course which could be ended only by allowing them to paralyze or smash the party, or by bringing them up short with summary disciplinary measures. What other course could responsible revolutionary leaders take but the latter?

It is sometimes possible, with the aid of events themselves and the superior position which Marxism has as compared with sectarianism, to win an ultraleftist current to the correct position in time. Marx, Lenin, Trotsky were able to do it more than once. Patience and the knowledge that time is working for the Marxian standpoint are required on the part of the leadership in order to deal properly with sectarians as well as with right-wing opportunists. There are, to be sure, limits to patience, and as a rule these limits are established when a recalcitrant group, however valuable may be individual members of it, conducts itself in so irresponsible and disruptive a manner as to threaten the very existence of the organization itself. That is why the principle of democratic centralism is of such indispensable value to the movement. While affording minorities all the rights in the world to present their standpoint and defend it through normal party channels and under the guidance of the leadership which the party has selected to direct and safeguard the organization, the party must insist that discipline be maintained, that the minority, which is striving to become the majority of tomorrow, submit to the majority of today.

If the sectarians (or right-wingers) refuse to obey this discipline, then, however regrettable it may be, there comes the parting of the ways. It has happened before our time; it will probably happen again in the future. It is an inevitable concomitant of political evolution under certain circumstances. With all their wisdom and skill, even such great leaders as Marx and Lenin and Trotsky found themselves faced on more than one occasion with an incorrigible group of unassimilable elements. An organizational rupture is never desirable; it should be averted if possible; it should not be wept over if it proves to be inevitable; and above all, of more importance than a small split is the safeguarding of the political line and the organizational integrity of the party.

Any other approach means dilettantism, anarchism, petty-bourgeois dabbling, but not serious revolutionary politics. Any other approach means the disintegration of the movement—for all that a member or a group would have to do in order to break up the party would be to say: I have a political difference with the party leadership or the party line; therefore, I am under no obligations to obey party discipline. Grant that right to Oehler today, and Smith will take it tomorrow, and Jones the day after, until the party is completely disaggregated.

The Zack case was precipitated by his flagrant breach of party discipline at the public meeting addressed by Cannon in New York on our trade-union line. Basing himself on a motion unanimously adopted by the PC on January 21, 1935, which called for a dissociation by the party from the trade-union line put forward by Zack, Cannon took occasion in the course of his remarks to state that while Zack had every right and opportunity to put forth his special standpoint inside our party, which does not seek for a Stalinist monolithism, it nevertheless had to be understood that the official party line was not that of Comrade Zack. This perfectly normal procedure, followed in the communist movement for years without anybody feeling "offended" or considering it a "monstrous provocation," was answered by Zack, speaking on his own authority and without permission from the party, rising in the meeting and taking public issue with the official representative of the party. This procedure was not only the exact opposite of "perfectly normal," but Zack, who knows what proper communist procedure is, knew it to be the case in this instance.

That this was no accidental occurrence was evidenced by the fact that at the same time Zack had sent a letter to the Minneapolis comrades, engaged in an action and pursuing the line unanimously adopted by the Political Committee, in which he urged them to

reject the PC policy and to adopt his. It goes without saying that when Zack was a functionary of the CP, both in the pre-Stalinist and the post-Leninist periods, he would never have dreamed of writing a letter to a group of comrades in another city who were engaged in a class-struggle action with the proposal that they cast out the Central Committee policy and adopt his own. Such a letter would have been as much as his membership card was worth, and rightly so. This too Zack knew perfectly well to be the case.

And to give final evidence of his intention to break with the party, Zack, it was revealed, had sponsored an enterprise called the "Independent Unionist," a semi-political, semi-trade-union paper, which Zack was to edit, but which the party knew absolutely nothing about, concerning which Zack had never taken the trouble to consult with the party, or even to give it the faintest notification that such a periodical was being planned.

The Political Committee thereupon decided to file charges against Zack immediately, and to propose to his branch that he be promptly expelled. With the exception of Stamm, the PC decided upon this measure unanimously. Here too we acted entirely in accordance with our line of loyal collaboration with the former members of the AWP. Not a single step was taken against Zack, and later against Stamm-Basky-Oehler, without previous consultation between us and the former AWP members of the PC: McKinney, Lore and West. Not only these comrades, but Muste, who was then in Toledo, was kept fully informed not only of the situation but also of our proposals and our perspectives. The story, later invented to serve as a factional platform against us, about the naive, innocent lambs, Lore, McKinney and Muste, who were bewitched and misled by the ogre Cannon, is too dull a fable even for infants.

Cannon's speech at the mass meeting was unanimously endorsed by the PC (always, of course, with the exception of the Oehlerites). The preferring of charges against Zack was unanimously decided by the PC, all of whose members are past the age of six. The defense of the PC position was entrusted jointly to Swabeck, McKinney and Shachtman in the Bronx branch, of which Zack was a member. The decision of the Bronx branch, controlled by Oehlerites, to exonerate Zack was unanimously reversed by the PC and Zack just as unanimously expelled. The decision to bring charges against Stamm and Basky (later, also Oehler) for flagrant violation of discipline in attacking the PC before the membership and circulating documents without authorization was made unanimously by the PC. Muste knew every single detail of what was happening; so did Weber. Neither one of them uttered a single word of protest, not one!

Muste's reproduction (in part; it would be better if he printed it in full) of the "notorious" Cannon letter to him in Toledo, which is supposed to prove the "disloyal" conspiracy against the Oehlerites and the AWPers plotted by us, proves precisely the contrary. By the picture it gives of the situation, by the account it gives of our proposals in the PC, by the account it gives of our perspectives with regard to the Oehlerites, it should be perfectly plain that we worked openly and fraternally with Muste and his associates, that nothing mysterious and concealed had been plotted.

"On returning recently from Ohio," said Muste at the June Plenum,

> to the center, I found the party in the turmoil with which all of us are now familiar. I was aware from a letter sent me by Comrade Cannon which I will submit to the plenum when we deal with the internal situation that it was the purpose of himself and others to secure the expulsion of the Oehler-Stamm group at this plenum. I had reason on the basis of this same letter to connect this proposed organizational measure with the policy of Comrade Cannon in re the so-called SP orientation with which I differ and which I regard as most injurious to the WP at this time.

And later, in a statement to the PC meeting of August 5, still repeating all the Oehlerite bunkum which constituted three-fourths of the Muste platform in those months, Muste denounced "Cannon's monstrous provocation at the Zack meeting in May."

Muste not only has a most unfortunate and undignified habit of crawling out from under the responsibilities indicated by his political position of the day before, with the plaintive cry that he was tricked or misled by some shrewd schemer, but he also has the disconcerting habit of forgetting this Monday what he signed his name to last Monday, and forgetting so thoroughly or else attaching so little importance to his political documents, that they stand in glaring conflict with each other. Read the above characterizations of our conduct in the Zack affair, and then read the PC statement on it, dated June 4, a week before the plenum, sent to all party branches by the party secretary, Muste, and approved by him in the Secretariat. In that document, for which one would imagine Muste would maintain sufficient responsibility to stand by it for a week, an entirely different picture of the Zack affair is presented:

> There were numerous and repeated demands from comrades in New York for a public exposition of our (trade union—MS) policy by means of a lecture. The lecture of Comrade Cannon served this aim. The internal situation, Zack's opinion on the French turn, the plot to "capitulate to the SP," the derelictions of other comrades, etc., had nothing to do with this matter. These issues were not under discussion at the meeting.... Under the

> circumstances it was necessary for the party speaker to bring the confusion created by Zack to an end. To do so in a public speech, and subsequently to publish extracts of the speech in the *New Militant*, was the best means for this public clarification. There was nothing abnormal or unprecedented in this procedure. It was the right and more than that, the ***duty*** of the party to make its position clear. The only criticism in order is the neglect to do so earlier. The assertion that the speech of Comrade Cannon was an "outrageous" and "provocative attack on a party member" is sheer nonsense.

Muste not only signed this statement and sent it out, but helped to edit it! But this does not prevent him from continuing to repeat all kinds of "sheer nonsense"—as he called it on June 4—about the Zack affair every time he has occasion to talk about it. As to other aspects of the Muste political line and organizational methods following his abrupt rupture of the collaboration with us, more will be said later. Suffice it here to point out, in conclusion, that at no time between his return from Ohio and the opening of the June Plenum did Muste, either by mail, in formal meeting, or in informal discussions, have one single word of criticism to make of the line we had pursued in the PC towards the violations of discipline of Zack, Oehler, Stamm and Basky. While, on the eve of the plenum, he expressed himself in private conference with us at Cannon's home against any expulsion of Oehler & Co. at the plenum, he nevertheless agreed that some disciplinary action would have to be taken, and never for a single moment intimated that he considered Cannon's public speech a "monstrous provocation" or that it was connected with the "SP orientation." On the contrary, he signed his name and gave approval to the whole line of the PC statement on the situation sent out to the branches on June 4. These are facts, which are, as is commonly known, very stubborn things.

But didn't Cannon and Shachtman nevertheless propose the expulsion of Oehler-Basky-Stamm in June? Triumphantly, Lore asked that the following be noted in the minutes of the June Plenum: "In the course of the Muste report, when Muste remarked 'you can't expel Oehler, Stamm and Basky, etc., now anyway,' Shachtman replied: 'Because you won't vote with us'." Quite right! The flagrant defiance of elementary party discipline by the sectarian trinity, their irresponsible disruptiveness, showed us that they had become a hopeless cancer that had to be eradicated from the party. We were prepared to take final and drastic measures on the assumption that the party, in its vast majority, was equally prepared. We were justified in this assumption by the fact that all the Musteite leaders, Muste included, had signified their intention to go through with the action we proposed. Together, we represented 90 percent of the party.

When it became evident that Muste was unloading responsibility, when he finally demurred at the proposal for drastic measures against the splitters, we concluded: An important part of the party and its leadership either fails or refuses to see eye to eye with us in this question. They are apparently not yet convinced of the correctness of our proposal, or of the acute danger represented by the Oehlerites. The party must therefore pay a heavy price for their blindness by spending invaluable time in educating these vacillating timid leaders to the fact that a cancer must not be temporized with and that the Oehlerites represent a cancer. We shall therefore also be compelled to pay the Oehlerite blackmailers, and leave them run rampant through the party for another period, until we have argued the matter out with Muste and Weber and their followers and convinced them of the incompatibility of Oehlerism with party membership. That is why we did not press for the expulsion of the Oehlerites at the June Plenum, but merely for another warning, another censure; that is how we lost three precious months, between June and October, until, at the latter date, Muste-Weber reluctantly agreed to our original proposal for action against the Oehlerites.

But didn't Cannon and Shachtman oppose any discussion in the ranks? Didn't they try to expel Oehler without a preliminary political discussion? And didn't Weber and Muste fight for months for such a discussion and finally force one, thus saving the party? This legend, too, it would be well to dispel, not merely because it represents another Muste-Weberite plagiarism from Oehler, but because it isn't true.

A good half of the Weberite platform against us, and Muste's as well, is based on this legend and its counterpart, namely, that they were for a discussion. It wasn't that Weber had any political differences with us over estimating the Oehler danger, but he and Muste opposed our "organizational" methods in liquidating Oehlerism. "The Cannon group," writes the ineffable Glotzer in his November 20, 1935, letter to the I.S., "proceeded on the notion that it could solve the problem of the Oehler group without a necessary and thoroughgoing political discussion with the aim of the complete clarification of the party organization.... Such a course would not and could not have clarified the political differences, would have (as was indicated at the June Plenum) alienated the Musteites, and permitted the exit of the Oehler group with about 200 followers (the support he claimed prior to the discussion in the party)."

And further, concerning the Weberite position at the June Plenum on the question of the French turn and the Oehler group:

> Our group took one step further than Cannon. We foresaw that the party would have to concern itself with

the *issues* in dispute, that it would be necessary for it to *discuss* the French turn, the other international questions, the issue of the Fourth International, in order to put an end to the agitation of the Oehlerites and to *render a decisive political defeat to that group*. While supporting the Cannon resolution, we introduced a supplementary statement (signed by Weber, Satir and Glotzer) which dealt specifically with the French turn and called for its support by the party (more evidence of an anti-ICL position!!!). In presenting this statement we declared it our intention to begin the discussion on the political differences existing on the international questions and the aim to win the party to the support of the ICL.... We declared it necessary for the party to record itself on the disputed question and...we declared it necessary for the party to support the ICL and the French turn, and proceeded to outline the reasons why.

In these two excerpts from Glotzer's letter, we quote seven sentences in all. ***Every single one*** of these seven sentences is a falsehood, both from the political and the factual standpoint. We take them one by one:

1. At least nine-tenths of the political and educational discussion arranged in the party was upon our initiative—not Glotzer's or Weber's or Muste's. In New York, where we are supposed to have put into effect the "no discussion policy," a general membership discussion meeting was held at least once a month from the inception of the party. On January 20 there was a discussion of the trade-union question; one week later, January 26, a general trade-union conference took place. Two weeks later, February 12, a general membership meeting took place to hear Muste report on the state of the party and to discuss the report. Two weeks after that, February 24, a general membership meeting to discuss the situation in the Soviet Union. Two weeks later, another general membership meeting was held on March 10 to discuss the Pittsburgh Plenum and Active Workers' Conference agenda. In addition, several meetings of branch functionaries (we now quote the district organizer's official report) "were held for discussion of concrete tasks before the party, special conferences of unemployed members of the party were held for discussion of party unemployed work, as well as meetings with branch organizations and with branch organizers, together with financial secretaries, etc."

At the Pittsburgh Plenum, Cannon and Shachtman proposed a series of discussion meetings in New York especially, to take up a whole series of questions really or allegedly in dispute. Such meetings were not only held but the minority of the NC was given the right to present publicly its oppositional viewpoint—a procedure not at all normal in a democratically centralized party when it is not in a pre-convention period. On April 8 the PC brought the post-Pittsburgh Plenum discussion to a close with this motion: "We consider the general discussion of the Pittsburgh Plenum, as instructed by the plenum, now concluded. This does not preclude further discussions on specific questions not finally decided by the plenum." To this motion there was no objection from Oehler and Stamm or from Weber and Gould, all four of whom were present! At the June Plenum, it was Cannon and Shachtman who made the proposal for inaugurating a series of discussions throughout the party, and just as, at Pittsburgh, we had made the proposal to establish an international information and discussion bulletin for our membership, in June we made the proposal for the discussion bulletin on our own internal disputes.

In New York, controlled by our group, we arranged a solid month of discussion meetings in the most democratic manner ever seen in the movement. Every group, big or small, was given exactly the same amount of time in which to present, to discuss and to summarize its point of view. Four general membership meetings were held on four Sundays running—one on the international question, one on the SP-CP, one on the internal question, one on the district report—at which each side gave its full presentation, and each Sunday meeting was followed by the Tuesday branch meeting at which the discussion and summary on each point took place. Each group had its documents in the hands of every single member—official plenum resolutions as well as caucus material by the pound, openly circulated by the Oehlerites, surreptitiously (of course!) by the Weberites. Let Satir and Glotzer, who have been running the Chicago organization for a year (right into the ground), show a discussion record that is one-tenth as substantial as this one!

2. Glotzer "saved" half of Oehler's supporters for the party so that when he pulled out, he took along only about 100. Oehler never had 200 supporters, and Glotzer knows it! He has to give this fantastic figure only in order to find some shamefaced excuse ("100 saved"!) for his criminal conduct in helping keep the party in totally needless turmoil for three invaluable months, during which we convinced...not the hopeless Oehlerites, but the Muste-Weber combination. The facts are: in the CLA, Oehler had about 40 or more supporters in New York; at the membership meeting of April 7 Oehler got 56 votes; in the New York district convention voting, Oehler got 61 votes; he took out of the party, finally, some 50 members in New York. In Philadelphia, he took no more than he always had, as far back as the CLA and throughout the WP. Ditto in every other branch, with one or two exceptions one way or the other (in Pittsburgh, his adherents date from the Pittsburgh Plenum; in Chicago, the Weber citadel, his adherents increased in number since the June Plenum!).

In other words, this sectarian faction was of such an

ossified character that, with a handful of exceptions, discussion alone could not break them up. Sometimes, as Trotsky says, you have "to yield the floor to time"—to time, to events, to experience; at least that is what even our greatest leaders have often had to do. So you didn't win any Oehlerites? Yes, the ***only*** group in the party that won anybody from the Oehlerites was our group (New York). And the only group in the party that Oehler won anybody from was the Weber group, and right in the bailiwick of the same Glotzer we are here refuting (Chicago, where almost a third of the membership came right out of the Weber camp and into Oehler's!).

3. "Our group took one step further than Cannon." Not true! It did not even go as far as Cannon. Our international resolution for solidarity with the ICL, for the Open Letter, against the anti-Trotskyist Oehlerites, was defended by us alone in the membership. At the Sunday meetings in New York, whenever Weber could find some difference with us, he availed himself of the opportunity offered each group to present its point of view and, at the three last meetings, he slashed away at us for all he was worth. On the one question where he declared that he agreed with us and disagreed with Muste and Oehler, on the international question, and where his "group took one step further than Cannon," Weber did not avail himself of the opportunity to speak! He was asked to do so by Shachtman, who was told that "you represent our viewpoint." Weber did not speak for our resolution in the membership meeting, and he did not even speak for his "step further." He wasn't a step ahead, but a step behind. When he could attack us, he jumped at the chance; when he could defend us, he remained silent.

4. 5. 6. 7. The statement of Weber & Co. on the French turn was ***not*** presented as a basis for discussion in the party so that the Oehler group could be given a "decisive political defeat" (to defeat Oehler, politically or otherwise, was the last thought in the Weberite mind!). Shachtman asked Glotzer at the June Plenum if the statement were being presented as a resolution to endorse the French turn, to be voted for or against by the plenum. Glotzer answered ***no***. The minutes actually read: "Glotzer stated that on the international question he and others would submit a statement but not a resolution." Nor was the statement ever put to a vote at the plenum! Nor was the statement ever put to a vote in the discussion that followed the plenum! Nor did the Weberites ever put the statement forward in the branches for discussion! Nor did they ever rise in the discussion to defend it or its contents. They left the defense of the French comrades from rabid Oehlerite attacks to our supporters; they busied themselves with buttressing Oehler & Co. by their attacks on our "organizational methods."

What Glotzer says about their declarations in June that the party must take a position "for the French turn" is simply ridiculous and shows that the man doesn't know—or else forgets—what he votes for half the time. Because he and his faction voted for our international resolution which, with the acceptable and accepted West amendment "No. 5," said: "The Workers Party ***is not at present obligated to take a position*** on the correctness of this tactic," i.e., the tactic of the French turn. The Weberites neither expected nor proposed a discussion of the French turn. Their "statement" was handed in primarily for the purpose of "distinguishing" themselves from us and secondarily in an attempt to squirm out of their old position on "organic unity." For that matter, neither did we show anxiety to discuss whether or not our French comrades should have entered the SFIO back in October 1934, not because we "feared" such a discussion, but because we had no particular desire to discuss what Trotsky, in a recent letter to the Belgian Vereecken, properly calls the "snows of yesteryear." Such discussions are relished precisely by sectarians; for us it was sufficient to declare that the entry was a tactical step, that our comrades had conducted themselves flawlessly from a revolutionary standpoint, that it was essential for our party to collaborate with them internationally, that it was just as essential for our party to smash the Oehlerite slanderers of our French comrades. And that is precisely what our June "international resolution" did declare, and why we also adopted the West amendment.

One final word about "discussions" and "expulsions." The mealy-mouthed hypocrisy of the Weberites is all the more repellent in face of two more facts:

1. At no time, not before the Pittsburgh Plenum, at it, after it, at the June Plenum, or at any other time, did Weber, Satir, Glotzer or Gould ever make one single, solitary motion or proposal for a discussion of ***any*** question. At no time! In fact, the only proposal Glotzer ever made on his own initiative in the whole period of the party's existence was contained in a letter to the PC proposing that we send a message of greetings to the newly-formed Dutch party. The other members of the Weberite quartet on the NC did not even make a proposal as valuable as that.

2. There ***was*** one group that had an ***a priori*** expulsion policy towards Oehler & Co., a policy of expulsion of Oehler even if he did not commit a single overt or for that matter covert act of indiscipline. Not our group, but ***Weber***! As far back as October 26, 1934, before the fusion, when Oehler would not dream of violating discipline (he had no Muste to give him protection!) and when, with all his sharp differences, his collaboration in League work was active and loyal, Weber wrote a letter to Glotzer which lack of space prevents us from printing

in full as an example of political depravity and unprincipled clique machinations, but from which we quote the following eloquent passages:

> Oehler plays the game of Naville. He has retreated from his outright opposition to fusion and is now engaged in trying to capitalize on the sentiment in the League directed against the NC. Even if he joins the new party—and he may split, particularly since the arrival of a German intrigant, sent by Bauer & Co. from abroad to buttonhole comrades and instill into their minds a lot of poisonous slander in order to build a Fifth International with the S.A.P. & the London Bureau (finally)—he will join just as does Naville, for the purpose of causing trouble at the first opportunity and bringing about a split, which is Max's (Shachtman's) view of what we ought to do in France!... ***It would be better in my opinion to slough off the elements around Oehler before joining*** (with the AWP—MS) ***and we might maneuver to force his hand.*** (My emphasis—MS)

This letter not only reveals ***who*** proposed (and ***when***!) the expulsion of Oehler by a "maneuver," when he was guilty of nothing but a political difference of opinion; not only throws light on the fraudulent line of the Weberites in the WP who cried that "both Oehler and Cannon" want to split, when they knew long in advance that Oehler would "cause trouble at the first opportunity and bring about a split"; but lays bare the whole revolting unprincipledness of this wretched Weber clique. We shall refer to the letter again!

* * * * *

To listen to the protestations of the Weberites, for the last few months, that is, one could only conclude that, so far as Oehlerism is concerned, they never had any political differences with us; their political evaluation of the nature and course, of the danger presented by Oehler & Co., their judgement of the Oehlerites as a reactionary, sectarian, anti-Trotskyist, basically unassimilable current, was the same as ours. Where they were superior to us, however, was in their criticism of our "organizational methods" and the putting forward of their own methods, by which they succeeded in cutting the Oehlerite strength in half. With the air of a man repeating an analysis that has been a commonplace to all for a long time, Glotzer says in his recent letter to the I.S., which was first sent out as a caucus letter and reprinted by the expelled Oehlerites before ever we saw it in the PC:

> The party prior to the June Plenum had experienced a heated internal dispute with the Oehler group. The political motives behind this dispute lay in Oehler's persistent opposition to the French turn, and its international aspects. His group endeavored, in spite of the fact that the party had only just become organized and had not entered into a discussion period, to organize the party against the views of LD, the ICL and the French organization.

What is true is true; what is indisputable is indisputable. And you would think, from the offhand manner in which Glotzer writes this, that he not only always had this opinion, but that he acted accordingly. If this was the analysis of Oehler that Glotzer's group always had, then they must have estimated him as we all estimated his international associates, Bauer & Co.: as a sterile, reactionary current, specializing in anti-Trotskyism and working, by the very logic of their whole political line, to split the genuine movement for the Fourth International, and consequently representing the acutest danger to our movement. But the whole trouble with the Weberite line was that, although this is how they write at the end of the year 1935, they had an opposite and consequently a false estimate for the whole first part of the year, i.e., during the time it was necessary to fight the Oehlerite menace ***inside*** the party, not to philosophize about it after they were on the ***outside***.

Our indictment of the Weberites includes this count: Their differences with us over Oehlerism ***did not*** lie in objections to our "organizational methods" but in an opposite ***political*** judgment of the Oehlerites. In other words, they had political differences with us as to Oehlerism, differences which caused them to shield the Oehlerites from our blows, differences which they cravenly hid under their abusive philippics against our "organizational methods." In this whole situation is contained an important lesson. The Weberite argumentation and method are not new, but age has not given them standing in our movement. We have met them before and we were taught by the Marxist leaders how to deal with them; that is why we were and are so intransigent against these politicians.

In a letter written on June 5, 1931, directed against the unprincipled Austrian cliquists like Frey and Landau, Comrade Trotsky said:

> F., L., and to a high degree N., are creating a new political legitimation for themselves of exceptional profundity. In politics, they are in agreement with Trotsky, but his organizational methods are false (as we see, even the words of the Weberite music are old!—MS). Not one of them has up to now taken the trouble to put down on paper, clearly and plainly, just what he actually means by "organizational methods." The people named, as well as many others, always begin to complain about organizational methods just at the moment when it proves to be necessary to subject them to ***political*** criticism.... Frey broke with us because he is no revolutionary internationalist. But he hides behind an organizational "comma" because it is not to his advantage to explain the essence of his break with us.... Completely aping his precursor Frey, Landau complains about organizational methods.... He cannot (that is, he does not yet need to, today) manufacture principled disagreements with the Russian Opposition, as he tried to manufacture disagreements with

> Leipzig on the Russian question. What remains for him? An organizational "comma." The unprincipled and thoroughly intriguish attempt of Landau to unite with the Prometeo group against the Russian Opposition most wretchedly discredits him. The Prometeo group is an ideological, serious and in its way very principled group, and in this respect represents the complete opposite of Landau. This group has never declared its solidarity with the Russian Opposition. Precisely during the last year it has been shown that the disagreements between this group and us are not only very great, but are systematically growing.... Now what does Landau do? He attempts to conclude a bloc with the Bordigists against the fundamental kernel of the International Opposition. Perhaps because he agrees with the Bordigists in the question of democracy? Oh, no, that isn't what Landau's thinking about. He is concerned with the purification of Trotsky's organizational methods and therefore needs allies. The whole thing is explainable by the "organizational" requirements of Landau. To be sure, Landau says: "We have serious differences with the Bordigists, but..." etc., etc. But after all that's the song of all the opportunists and adventurers: "Disagreements should not prevent joint work." It would be good to ask one of these sages to explain the reciprocal relationships between ***politics*** and ***organization***, upon the counterposing of which all of them, under Frey's leadership, build their own "politics" and their own "organization." Nobody wrote with such grandiloquent pathos about the "organizing of the October revolution" and the "organizing of the Red Army" as did Landau. It would be interesting to ask him how he conceives of organization in this case. As pure politics, or as organizational technique free of politics, or as such a union of the two in which organization represents the means of politics? The counterposing which Landau undertakes results from this, that for him, as clique leader, organizational methods have a completely independent, yes, arbitrary character. To whisper something to one, to trip up someone else, to set intrigues afoot against a third, to wheedle his way into the graces of a group of insufficiently critical workers, to tickle their prejudices—these organizational methods have nothing in common with politics, at least not with Marxian politics. Yet the task lies precisely in purging our ranks of these poisonous and decomposing methods.

If these words are not a photograph of Weberism, they are at least a pretty faithful sketch! Now let us see what ***political*** position was hidden behind the "organizational comma" of Cannon and Shachtman which was the "only thing" the Weberites objected to. Remember that our ***political*** analysis of the Oehlerites, from the very beginning, was that they represented a factional, sectarian tendency, reactionary and sterile. In the WP, we made this statement as early as the Pittsburgh Plenum, and in more amplified form ever since.

And the Weberites? In his statement to the Pittsburgh Plenum on why he would not vote for the motion designating the Oehlerites as sectarian and the main danger to the party, Satir wrote:

> I cannot, however, agree with that section of the motion which flows out of Comrades Cannon's and Shachtman's speeches and which characterizes Comrade Oehler and his co-thinkers as full-blown and hardened sectarians—especially so since the criterion here seems to be Oehler's insistence on committing the party to a position on this or that political question.... I particularly disagree with the argument that the main danger at this time is from the direction of Oehler.... In the previous sessions of the NC it was not established that Oehler's position is fundamentally different than that of the NC. For that reason the branding of Oehler as an arch-sectarian and the concentration of all the fire against his line is obviously uncalled for.

Glotzer handed in a similar statement! Gould, in his statement, wrote:

> In agreement with that section of the (NC) resolution which condemns the factional attitude of Oehler and his followers. I do not subscribe (for similar reasons given in the statements of Glotzer and Satir) with the section of the NC resolution which characterizes Oehler as having a sectarian position.

Even a month later, on April 7, 1935, Weber, in a statement on the results of the Pittsburgh Plenum, wrote:

> We consider as unwarranted and premature the attempt to condemn the Oehler group as a hard and fast sectarian faction, since no major differences between this grouping and the NC have been presented to clinch any argument arising in connection with such condemnation. We are unwilling to lend ourselves to an undue sharpening of differences but prefer to alleviate the situation. We are unwilling to label and condemn this grouping since this may help lay the basis for future organizational measures.

Now, regardless of whether or not we had presented sufficiently "clinching arguments" to prove our charge of sectarianism, the fact is that all the Weberites knew, or should have known, from the CLA onward, that the Oehlerites ***did*** represent a thoroughly sectarian line, that if it had not yet manifested itself in the WP in the form of their French turn position, then it had appeared quite clearly in the Oehlerite attempt to disrupt the fusion. But the factional interests of the Weberites carried the day; as always, they drew their political line from their organizational (factional) requirements. They saw the prospect of a fight against Cannon, with the Oehlerites as a useful counterbalance (and who knows? perhaps also an ally in another bloc?), and that is why they refused to characterize Oehler ***politically*** as he should have been! They wouldn't accept our characterization, and put forward none of their own. At the April 7, 1935, New York post-Pittsburgh membership meeting, the majority of those present voted for the NC motion; the Oehlerites voted for their own oppositional motion; all the Weberites

(Weber, Gould, Abern, Sterling, Ray, Weaver, Milton, Engel) abstained demonstratively en bloc, without presenting a resolution of their own (a typical piece of Weberite cowardice)!

At no time did we receive a single ounce of support from the Weberites in the fight against Oehlerism, until, after the October Plenum, when the Oehlerites walked out of the party, the Weberites joined with us to record the fact and formally expel them. At no time did the Weberites take the initiative in the struggle against Oehlerism. If they did intervene, it was for the purpose of sabotaging the fight, of protecting and shielding this reactionary clique of neo-Weisbordites, of protesting against calling the Oehlerites "sectarian," protesting the expulsion of Zack, protesting the expulsion of Oehler, denying that there were serious differences in the party—in other words, acting the role of shield-bearers for the Oehlerites.

When Zack was expelled, the first reaction of the Weberites was to attack the...PC. On May 24, Satir and Glotzer, prompted by Oehler who was in Chicago, telegraphed the PC their "alarm" over the Zack expulsion and the charges against Stamm and Basky. Under their leadership, the Chicago branch adopted a protest against the PC. Did these two statesmen bother to inquire first of the PC for its reasons for expelling Zack, for the circumstances surrounding the case? Not for a minute! Did these two NC members, in face of repeated PC regulations, defend the PC before the Chicago membership, as was their elementary duty, or at least advise the membership to wait until the PC had an opportunity to present its information and position? Not for a minute! Oehler's word was good enough for them to act upon; besides, here was another chance to get in a blow against Cannon. The Berkeley branch, controlled by the Weberites, voted, according to the PC records of June 10, that it is "irrevocably (!) opposed to the expulsion of Zack and demands his reinstatement." Another Weberite branch, Akron, decided in favor of "protesting against Cannon's attack on Zack at open forum" and "requesting NC to reconsider its actions on the Zack expulsion."

That is how the Weberites fought our "organizational methods": always by giving aid and comfort to the Oehlerites every time they should have given them blows, or else been polite enough to get out of our way so that we might deliver them ourselves. When the Oehlerites complained about our "organizational methods," we understood what they were talking about. Thus, in his PC statement of August 5, 1935, Stamm wrote that our "policy of factionally monopolizing the press is precisely the policy used by the capitulators of Charleroi against the comrades who opposed them. ***It is characteristic of the brutal, bureaucratic methods employed throughout the ICL by those who support and apply the new orientation.***" The Oehlerites were fighting against the line and the methods of the ICL and Comrade Trotsky; ***consequently***, they fought our line and methods, which were indistinguishable from the ICL's. But the Weberites? They fished in troubled waters....

At the June Plenum, and after, the Weberites developed a new political line: The Oehlerites are a danger; the Cannonites are just as much a danger. We will fight both of them with the same vigor because they both stand on the same plane—they both want a split. "The speech of Comrade Cannon," said Glotzer-Satir in their plenum statement, "indicates to us his desire for such a split, and the statement introduced by the Cannon group is a further confirmation of this. Likewise, the speeches and threats of the Oehler group also (!) drive unmistakably to a split." (It is true that in this statement, Glotzer and Satir advanced as compared with Pittsburgh; they actually labelled the Oehlerites "sectarians." Dear, dear! But then, they advanced also with regard to us; they labelled the fighters against the anti-Trotskyist crew as "splitters"...and to show their complete objectivity, they labelled the anti-Trotskyists the same way.)

More than a month later, Gould declared at a New York membership meeting (speech of July 27, sent out as a caucus document):

> The present party condition is a product of the methods and attitudes of the two groups (the Cannonites and the Oehlerites) both of whom had pursued these methods in the CLA and who entered the party with skepticism.... Both set to work to liquidate the other. The fight, the factionalism, the animosity that now threatens the existence of the party, is the product of the conscious workings of these two caucuses.... Our group stands today firm against the false line of Oehler, stands today against the false line of Cannon. We stand opposed to their methods. We stand opposed to their line.... We will fight until we defeat both of you politically and we promise to accomplish this aim.

Not badly put, eh? and certainly not timidly put; but like most Weberite promises, not worth the paper it's written on.

And the fourth sermon-monger of the Weberites, Weber himself, wrote in his post-June Plenum statement on the SP-CP question (also sent out as a caucus document): "The orientation of building up the party should mean first of all the consolidation of all our forces internally, which means establishing peace. There is every political basis for this despite the embittered feelings that are all that is left in the way of peace."

Not political, ***irreconcilable political differences***, stand in the way of "peace," explained our own Father

Divine, but only "embittered feelings"! We said: consolidate the ***loyal party forces*** by uniting in a fight against the main danger to the party and the international movement, Oehlerism. That was our political line. The Weberite line was: Oehler's line and methods aren't so good; Cannon's line and methods are just as bad; we will fight them both in the same way and on the same plane; meantime, boys, don't feel bitter about it—let there be peace on earth and good will to all men.

In actuality, of course, they didn't even follow this line. Nine-tenths of their attacks—and this holds true also of Muste—were directed ***at us***. They collaborated with Muste and Oehler, but not with us (for example, the Musteite proposals for "solving" the internal situation at the June Plenum were drawn up after joint consultation with Oehler and Weber, but not with us; they were voted for by Muste-Oehler-Weber, who all voted against us). Read, for example, Gould's speech on July 27: one paragraph or two against Oehler, the balance of the speech against Cannon and Shachtman. Read, for example, Weber's statement on the SP-CP: one paragraph of criticism of the Oehler position, one paragraph of criticism of the Muste position, the ***entire balance*** directed at us. Recall, for example, the four post-June New York membership meetings: on the international question, where Weber agreed with us, and opposed Oehler and Muste, he did not take the floor for us and against them; where he disagreed, he or Gould took the floor three times to deliver the bulk of their speeches against us.

These are the reasons why we fought the Weber ***political*** line on the internal situation with such vigor, as well as the methods they used in pursuing this line. Let us assume for a moment that in the fight against the reactionary Oehlerites, we displayed such an intense anxiety to protect the party from their pernicious influence that we sometimes went beyond the limits of the situation, the limits of the development of the party members' (and leaders') clarity about the situation, and that we therefore proposed correct steps prematurely. We are even ready to discuss, honestly and objectively, this assumption, to the extent that it is worth discussing at this date. But even in such a case, the duty of the wiser Weberites would have been to call attention merely to our over-anxiety to shield the party, to say to us: We agree entirely with your estimate of this danger; but before acting as you propose, it is necessary to convince the comrades who are not yet sure of your proposals; what is more, we will join with you and side by side, unitedly, we will win the overwhelming majority of the party to our view, isolate the Oehlerite danger and smash it. But instead of saying this, the Weberites said: Oehler? Cannon? Same thing!

How did Trotsky judge the situation? In his letter to our party on August 12 (in Muste's article for the January 10, 1936, *Internal Bulletin*, he quotes a couple of sentences from this letter, but omits the decisive sentences which precede and follow his quotation; by comparison, the reader will see that Muste has another distressing habit: of beginning and ending quotations only at those points where they are least—how shall we say?—inconvenient and embarrassing to him), Trotsky wrote:

> Comrades Weber and Glotzer accuse the Cannon group of proceeding too rudely and bureaucratically against Oehler. I cannot express an opinion on this charge since I have not had the opportunity to follow the development of the struggle. ***Hypothetically*** (this emphasis is Trotsky's; all the rest are mine—MS) I can accept the ***possibility*** of a certain hastiness on the part of the leading comrades. It would naturally be a mistake to desire to liquidate organizationally an opposition group before the overwhelming majority of the party has had the chance to understand to the full the inconsistency and sterility of that group. Leaders are often impatient in seeking to remove an ***obstacle*** in the path of the party's activity. In such cases, the party can and must correct the precipitateness of the leaders, since it is not only the leaders who educate the party but the party as well which educates the leaders. Herein lies the salutary dialectic of democratic centralism.
>
> ***But Comrades Weber and Glotzer are decidedly wrong when they place on the same plane the "mistakes" of Oehler and the "mistakes" of Cannon.*** Sectarianism is a cancer which threatens the activity of the Workers Party, which paralyzes it, envenoms discussions and prevents courageous steps forward in the life of the workers' organizations. I should like to hope that a surgical operation will not be necessary—***but precisely in order to avoid expulsions, it is necessary to strike pitilessly at the Oehler group by a decision of an overwhelming majority.*** This is the preliminary condition of all possible future successes for the WP. We all desire that it remain independent, but before all and above all, independent of the cancer which is eating at its vitals.

(Muste omits from his quotation the first 3 sentences, prints the next one, omits the fifth sentence, prints the sixth and seventh, and omits the balance. A most fascinating quoter is Muste!)

To paraphrase Trotsky, the Weberites (and the Musteites who kept begging Oehler to join with them in a "loyal struggle" against "Cannon's methods"!) are politically incapable of distinguishing between a broom and the obstacle which it sweeps aside; at best, all they can see is a cloud of dust. The Weberites are politically incapable of distinguishing between a surgeon and a cancer he is operating on; all they hear is somebody crying out and blood flowing—whereupon they curse both surgeon and cancer and call for peace and bandages. In politics, this inability to distinguish is a fatal disqualification; when this inability is manifested not by honest but confused militants but by presumably politically mature persons who render themselves blind by letting personal

antipathies and clique interests determine their course, it is criminal.

What, it will be asked, are the considerations that actuate the Weber clique, which, politically speaking, isn't worth a nickel? The answer to that is contained in an exposition, based as before on documents, of the origin of the Weber faction, which, if not entertaining, is at least instructive.

The Origin of the Weber Group

The origin of the Weber group, like its political position in general, is shrouded in that obscurity and mystification which are characteristic of cliques that operate in the dark, shamefacedly, without banner unfurled, without candidness, without principled platform. Of the five recorded official statements on the origin of the faction made by various representatives of it—five recorded statements are all I have been able to gather to date—not one of them jibes with the other. And that, as we shall see, is not hard to understand, because all of them are untrue.

The minutes of the CLA convention read, after recording the statements of Oehler and Cannon announcing the dissolution of their respective factions, as follows: "Weber announced that he had no caucus prior to the convention, dissolves the Weber caucus and pledges loyal collaboration with other members of the new party." Statement I, therefore, is that while the faction was, by divine power of attraction of similars, constituted right at the convention, none had existed up to that time.

The same minutes record the following indignant statement made by the other Weberite delegate from New York, the noted activist and statesman, Sterling: "I wish to protest vigorously the statement of Shachtman that I was or am (!) in any kind of a faction with Comrade Weber ever since the breakup of the so-called Shachtman faction. I consider that this statement of Shachtman is maliciously intended to create the impression that such a faction did exist for the purpose of an unprincipled struggle against the NC." Statement II, therefore, is that, contrary to Weber's assertion, there was no Weber faction even at the CLA convention—Sterling denied that he either "was or am" in one, or that it ever existed.

In his November 20, 1935, letter to the I.S. of the ICL, Glotzer explained: "The Cannon letter declared falsely that the Weber group formed a sort of opposition to the fusion. The Weber group constituted itself only immediately before the CLA convention (November 1934) and at the convention." Statement III, therefore, is that the faction, contrary to both Weber and the vigorously protestant Sterling, did exist and was organized (on what platform? Stupid question!) before the CLA convention.

In his letter to the I.S., dated December 29, 1935, Weber writes that "we" felt "that it had become necessary after March to open up the discussion on the French turn so as to bring about ideological clarification. There was everything to gain by achieving political understanding first, and everything to lose by resorting only to organizational measures. This position we made perfectly clear in a statement to the New York district after the March Plenum." Statement IV, therefore, is that in the WP, the Weber faction was formed only after the March Plenum (Pittsburgh) when "we" had a "position" which "we made perfectly clear."

But in his speech to the New York party membership on July 27, 1935, later sent out as a caucus document, Gould, in his unterrified bid for leadership, declared: "We, and we alone, are the only group that can come before the party at this juncture and honestly place before the membership for examination the history of the work, the attitude and the work of the Weber group: as the group that foresaw (!) and exposed (!!) the trickery of Cannon at the Pittsburgh Plenum." To foresee, one must exist before the event foreseen. Statement V, therefore, is that the Weber group not only existed, but also foresaw things and exposed them ***before*** the March Plenum.

Now, as previously indicated, none of these statements on the origin of the Weber faction corresponds to the truth. The *fact* is that it was established under the auspices of Weber and Abern (the same Abern whom this same Weber once proposed to Shachtman to run out of the movement because he was a menace to it! and to run him out for anything but political reasons...) almost exactly two years ago—established essentially by do-nothing grumblers, impotent malcontents, retired tent-sulkers and the like, and based upon gnawing personal antipathies and anticipated but nonexisting differences of opinion.

The CLA was essentially a propaganda group which, for a whole series of historical circumstances chiefly beyond its control, had to suffer all the maladies of a circle, a sect. All its progressive features combined—and they were many—were not strong enough to eliminate entirely these maladies, brought on basically by its enforced isolation from the health-giving flow of the broad class struggle. Just as it would be philistinism to ignore the great contributions to the revolutionary movement which even this small propaganda group was able to make and did make, so it would be gross sentimentalism and misplaced patriotism to ignore the negative aspects of its existence. Among these negative aspects are tendencies to routine conservatism; to

personal frictions which become exaggerated beyond all proportion to their real importance; to yielding to isolation and becoming ingrown and contented with things as they are; to bitterness with your isolation becoming transformed into finding fault with this or that comrade, this or that group for objective difficulties basically beyond anyone's control; to a dozen and one other of the evils attendant upon the life of a propaganda group.

In the course of the early years of the CLA (1932-1933), these negative aspects of the League's life were manifested in an increasingly violent struggle in the leadership and the ranks which divided them into two groups, the Cannon and Shachtman factions. It would lead us too far afield to go into the details of this internal struggle. Nor is it necessary, if only because of the facts that it has long ago been outlived and effectively liquidated and that it had no basis in political or principled differences. It appeared to revolve around accusations of organizational abuses on the one side and similar delinquencies on the other, for both sides repeatedly stressed the absence of serious political differences as the basis of the fight. What is necessary is that a political explanation be given of ***why*** the fight took place, what was its nature, and how it was and why it had to be settled. The Weber group today lives essentially on poisoned reminiscences of that obsolete struggle; it still circulates the faction accusations of Shachtman against Cannon and vice-versa as the material with which it "educates" its supporters. It tears situations and arguments right out of their context and in a thoroughly absurd—not to say criminal—manner applies them to present-day situations which have no kinship with those of the past. The clearest summary of what the CLA internal dispute was, at bottom, was made in a letter to the International Secretariat written by Comrade Trotsky on March 7, 1933. We quote a lengthy excerpt from it because it is not only a ***political*** explanation of the League's internecine strife but because it will help to lay bare the falsity of the whole Weber faction's foundation.

> For several years the action of the League bore mainly a literary propagandist character. The number of members vacillated around the same figure, varying according to the improvement or worsening of the work at the center. The absence of progress in the movement, as has always been the case, aroused all sorts of personal antagonisms. The same absence of progress in the movement does not permit these antagonisms to take on a political character. This has given and still gives to the struggle an excessively poisoned character in the absence of a principled content clear for everybody. Members of the organization do not learn anything from such a struggle. They are forced to group themselves according to personal attachments, sympathies and antipathies. The struggle of the groups becomes, in its turn, an obstacle to the further progress of the movement....
>
> It is quite possible that in this struggle there are contained plausible principled differences in embryonic form. Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that the two groups anticipate too much and sharpen the organizational struggle between the groups and persons altogether out of proportion with the development of the political work and of the questions raised by the latter.... A genuine solution of the internal difficulties can only be found along the path of expanding the mass work.... Of course, it is theoretically possible that with the transition to broader work, the potential differences can assume an open and active political character. But up to the present, this has not at all been expressed in anything. More or less full-fashioned, serious and firm differences have not been revealed in any of the three fields of work mentioned above. There remains another explanation: the aggravation of the crisis has been called forth by the mechanics themselves of the transition from one stage of work to another. This does not exclude the birth of serious differences in the future, but these do not necessarily have to correspond with the lineup of the present groupings.... It is quite possible that the leadership, after some regroupments, will be constituted from elements of both the present groups.... Given the absence or, at least, the non-obviousness of the principled basis in the struggle of the groups, ***conciliationism is quite justified and progressive in the internal life. It is necessary now, at the present stage***, to support this tendency with all the authority of the international organization.

The point of view contained in this letter finally met with the agreement of the representatives of both factions who visited Trotsky to discuss our internal situation (Swabeck and Shachtman), and was finally embodied in the resolution on the American situation adopted by the 1933 plenum of the ICL, which further proposed that "the factional organizations should be dissolved." Both representatives pledged themselves to carry this resolution into effect to the full extent of their powers, and to win their partisans to its support. There are no clear political differences; conciliationism is healthy and justified; dissolve the factions; plunge into mass work; if there are latent political differences they will show themselves when they emerge as political reactions to problems of the class struggle; but they need not necessarily manifest themselves organizationally in the old factional lineup—a new one may appear. This was the line which both the old factions—Cannon, Shachtman, Swabeck, Glotzer, Oehler, Abern, Stamm, Weber—formally declared to correspond to the realities of the situation, formally declared themselves ready to support.

Yet "the mechanics themselves of the transition from one stage to another" provoked a sharpening of the situation for a time. Instead of the situation being

improved, the League reached a point where it was threatened with a split. In a letter to Shachtman, Trotsky wrote on March 8, 1933:

> You are marching towards a split there and that would mean the catastrophe for the League. It is actually all the same, regardless of what side is more in the wrong, for both sides will be in no position to explain to the workers what caused the split. And that will completely compromise both groups. In one of your letters you gave expression to the hope that the next conference would settle the disputes. This is by no means my opinion. If your group gets 51 percent, it would change nothing in the matter.

And, referring to this letter, Trotsky wrote Glotzer on March 14, 1933:

> I can only give you the same counsel: In no case and under no circumstances to sharpen the situation in the League. The I.S., I hope, will intervene in a few days in the American question. Any impatience on the part of your group would bring closer a split. And a split without political physiognomy is the most dangerous miscarriage, which may inflict death upon the mother as well as upon the child. Also the hope for an early national conference could, under the given conditions, call forth only an insignificant shifting of the relationship of forces. Whether your group has five representatives in the National Committee and the others four, or the reverse, remains pretty insignificant, since the one group is dependent upon the other if one is not to drive to a split, that is, to a catastrophe. No impatience, dear Glotzer. You must prepare yourself for long work. You will say to me: "And the others, the Cannon group?" Naturally, it goes for both groups at the same time.

Precisely in order to prevent the split "without political physiognomy," in order to ameliorate the League situation, to make possible collaboration, to facilitate the turn to mass work, Shachtman had proposed to his friends the liquidation of the group. And for a time it was in effect liquidated. (The same proposition was made by Cannon in his group where, interestingly and significantly enough, resistance was offered to dissolution primarily by Stamm and Oehler.) Led by Weber and Abern, however, a number of comrades, still agitated by reminiscences of yesterday's sharp antagonisms, demanded the reconstitution of the faction—a direct violation, it goes without saying, of the formal pledge made to dissolve the groups—and, at a meeting where Shachtman was present, he was lustily indicted for having let the faction go to pieces. Shachtman pointed out that a group can exist under then-obtaining circumstances only if it has a distinct platform of its own and is ready to fight in the organization for leadership as against another group.

But not only did we not have a distinct platform of our own, but, with all the denunciations of the "Cannon regime," nobody in the group was prepared to "take over leadership." Spector had retired again to Canada; Glotzer had found the responsibilities of leadership at the center a bit onerous and had retired to Chicago, from behind which he kept up a systematic criticism of the Resident Committee for its "lack of functioning"; Abern had retired from all leading activity and refused to undertake any work, either under instructions from the League or from the faction. Of the more or less leading comrades, only Shachtman and Lewit were carrying on any responsible activity in the center.

In order to achieve the dissolution of the group in an indirect way—by demonstrating the baselessness of it, its futility, its pretentiousness—Shachtman cut the ground from under the Abernites who were insisting on the perpetuation of the faction by proposing that only those can be members of the group who are subject to its discipline and ready to do work for the League which the group would decide they must do. Abern voted against this motion, thereby placing himself outside the group. The minutes of our January 13, 1934, meeting read: "Group to meet Sunday, January 20, at 10 a.m. Letter from Marty (Abern) to be read.... Settle group once for all." At the January 20 meeting it was settled, "once for all." It was the last meeting of the "Shachtman group." ***But it is from that time that dates the birth of the Weber-Abern caucus!***

The decisive reason why neither the Cannon nor the Shachtman groups could ever be reconstituted on the old basis lay in the fact that in the course of the year 1934, the progressive forces in both groups found a common political basis, which not only broke down the old lines effectively and made a reality of Trotsky's prediction that "the leadership, after some regroupments, will be constituted from elements of both the present groups"—but which facilitated the great advances made by the League in practical work and wiped out for good the impending danger of a split. Cannon and Shachtman worked out jointly, and in complete harmony, the whole line and perspective of the fusion with the AWP, and together carried the burden of the work of effecting the fusion and defending it in the membership. Cannon and Shachtman achieved a complete harmony of view with regard to the essential "international" question facing the League that year—the so-called French turn and its endorsement by the CLA. Cannon and Shachtman achieved a complete unity of view and conduct in the course of the famous Minneapolis strike, which was the high-water mark of the League's activities.

In the face of this political and working solidarity, it would have been criminal—and worse: stupid—for Cannon to have based his attitude towards Shachtman on what he had said about him a year or two before, or for Shachtman's attitude towards Cannon to retain the

same old basis. Kentucky feuds are fought that way—unto the seventh generation. Gang fights are conducted on the same principle ("I'll get him for what he did to me if I have to wait ten years"). Bolsheviks detest feudism and gangsterism in politics. They base their collaboration on political agreement, regardless of whom they agree with; they base their antipathies on political disagreement, regardless of whom they disagree with. No more violent philippics can be imagined than those hurled back and forth between Lenin and Trotsky for 14 long and feverishly polemical years. Yet the moment they met in the Russia of 1917 and discovered that they had arrived at political agreement, they reestablished the firmest and most durable political and organizational collaboration seen since the days of Marx and Engels. Don't imagine for a moment that there weren't Russian Weberites in those days who were discomfited by this resumed solidarity and who insinuatingly whispered the old stories about what Lenin once said about Trotsky and what Trotsky once said about Lenin. But during Lenin's lifetime these feudists never dared raise their voices above a whisper, else they would have received the answer they deserved and which Lenin was quite capable of giving in his own crushing way. They had to wait for Lenin to die before their type of politics could be shouted in public and finally be made to prevail in the Soviet Union.

Now, we need no muttonhead to remind us that neither Cannon nor Shachtman is a Lenin or Trotsky. What is important is the essence of the comparison. At least between Lenin and Trotsky there had been serious, deep political differences before 1917; between Cannon and Shachtman there had been only organizational differences, and of a minor temporary character at that. The fact that they were able to collaborate organizationally after having found such indisputable political agreement on every important question facing the CLA, should have been welcomed by every serious League member, not only because it made possible a liquidation of the bad state of affairs in the organization and a leap forward in its work, but because it showed that the responsible leaders of the League did not act in their disputes like Kentucky feudists or Chicago gangsters. The Weberites did not welcome it, however, and they translated their dissatisfaction with the ending of the old war they had enjoyed so much into the formation of a clique that would continue circulating the old caucus documents and fighting the old battles, regardless of the fact that, as the months went by and new problems arose to be solved, the membership, especially the new comrades, came to know less about the origin and nature of the old disputes and—properly enough—cared less. They were like the aged imperial warrior in Dryden's "Alexander's Feast":

> Soothed with the sound, the king grew vain;
> Fought all his battles o'er again;
> And thrice he routed all his foes, and thrice
> he slew the slain.

They were—and though there is nothing either imperial or warrior-like about them, they still are.

You will ask: What was the political platform of the Weber group which distinguished it from other groups or tendencies and thereby warranted the formation of a faction? It had no political platform.

You will ask: What political differences did it have at that time with the NC? It had no political differences, but it hoped they would develop.

You will ask: What political differences did develop in the last year of the CLA's existence to justify their anticipations? None really developed, for, as pointed out previously in this document, the Weberites found that on the ***main*** line of the ***main*** questions facing the League that crucial year, they were in avowed agreement with Cannon and Shachtman.

You will ask: Can this be called a political group contributing anything positive and healthful to the movement? No, it can only be called by its right name: an unprincipled clique without a platform of its own, skulking in the dark, operating surreptitiously, envenoming the party with its letters containing accusations which they dare not make in the party publicly, seeking to undermine by any means at its disposal those comrades upon whom they insist the responsibility of leadership must fall, lying in wait for an opportunity to pounce upon those who take responsibility and discharge it by allying or blocking up with anybody who, for whatever reason, is also opposed to this leadership.

What a perfect portrait Weber draws of himself and his faction in his revolting letter to Glotzer on October 26, 1934!

> Papcun came to New York intending to get together all the "honest" elements for a discussion. He proposed that I sit in the same room with Oehler for a serious discussion. Valuing Papcun I stated my willingness for undertaking such an impossible discussion, although I told him plainly that no group could be formed on any such notion as "honesty." (It wouldn't be bad as one of the ingredients, however!—MS.) Oehler refused to discuss and Papcun has now become convinced that one has to work with a homogeneous group. I think I brought him over to my view on the French question and he is willing to start a group more or less in accord on ideas. Marty—possibly in view of the *Daily Worker* matter—was scared off even from discussion. But I am now convinced that a new group is necessary. I believe we can start with the French question as a club and prevent the Oehlers from falsely corralling the sentiment of the League against the NC majority and its methods of doing business.

What good tidings to bear to the countryside! After waiting for almost a year, Weber had found an issue on which to fight the NC, on which to recruit members for his woebegone secret caucus. "We can start with the French question as a club"—there is a sentence that should go down as a classic of political abomination! And what "French question" would serve as "the club"? "Organic unity"! Shachtman and Swabeck had come out against it, and, said Weber, Trotsky had come out for it in a recent article ("at least, so I think," said Weber about an article signed "Linier" which was a pseudonym selected by Molinier by dropping the first two letters of his name!). Now, thinks Weber, we'll also come out for "organic unity," Shachtman and Cannon will oppose it, we'll have Trotsky on our side, we'll have our yearned-for issue, we'll have a club and—praise Allah!—our chance at last to smash the "regime."

"I am still chuckling and smacking my lips, some would say of me that I am licking my chops, over your letter to the inestimable Max," Weber writes gleefully.

> You scored him at every turn and on every point, showing a new skill with that rapier, the pen. (This is what is known as the art of choking a cat with butter!—MS)...There is a logic of action when once one takes a certain road that drives willy-nilly straight towards the end of that road. It is only the great mind—greater than Max possesses—that knows how to change a false course in time. Starting by "suppressing" effectively through the gentle art of delay the documents of an Abern, a Glotzer and a Weber in a discussion, the Shachtmans may end by beginning to suppress the documents of a Trotsky. And that has already happened! The NC has voted against printing in the *Militant* an excellent article by "Crux" (the Old Man) printed in *Unser Wort* because it is "wrong" from the NC standpoint on organic unity. Of course they offer to mimeograph it for the members—but we can place no trust in them at all. And the Old Man did not take the steps he did in France without the clearest kind of warning that this is a matter on which he will break with who disagree. Are the Shachtmans and Swabecks ready to break? Obviously not, and hence the greater their demolition of the position of organic unity*, the greater will be the abjectness of their capitulation when the proper time comes—if they do not pursue the course too far on which they are now headed.

This letter sums up the character of the whole Weber caucus and the basic point wherein it differs from us: Our "organizational methods" flow directly, logically, conformably from our political line, from which they are inseparable. With Weber, however, his political line flows directly from his "organizational requirements," that is, from his unprincipled platformless factional antipathy towards us. The difference is that which exists between a Marxian group and a reactionary clique. Hating us intensely on the basis of old, half-forgotten disputes, Weber formed his clique, lay in wait for months looking for a "club" and then finally, "smacking his lips," he discovered or manufactured one. But does this mean that Weber was ready to take over the responsibilities then borne by those whom he was going to "club" out of leadership? Not for a moment, for with all its disadvantages, life is too comfortable as it is, and surreptitious sniping is far easier than carrying on the work at the center. Let us read a little more from this revealing-revolting letter:

> Finally, let us ask, why are our "leaders" opposed to having the Stalinists enter into an organic unity with our own forces and the SP in France? Evidently because they were thinking not so much of France, of which they knew so little, as of America. And here they would probably take a similar stand under similar conditions (which are not in sight yet). They are opposed ***under all conditions***! Hence there is no point in looking elsewhere than right here for the reasons. One must conclude that the answer lies in—***careerism***. Evidently joining the SP or any other party after it has become centrist (and even this they ignore) involves the possibility of gaining leadership or at least important posts. And we don't want too many competitors, especially when backed by a large following. One cannot explain their stand otherwise.

It is only with the greatest restraint that we refrain from characterizing in the only way he can be characterized the comfortably placed author of the above lines who, though a tractor could not draw him into the not over-lucrative post of a party worker, writes so intimately and expertly about careerists hunting for posts. What is ***politically*** important—and those are the things

*The "organic unity" position we were going to capitulate to is detailed by Weber further along in the letter; it is simply too unique to let go unquoted. "In France, one way or another, we ***must*** bring about the formation of Soviets.... In a sense, and certainly in the sense in which all groupings can agitate freely for the adoption of their point of view, the Soviet may be called an 'organic unity.' The question is: would not the formation of Soviets, which do not fall from heaven, be greatly facilitated by the formation of a single, united party with its roots reaching into the remotest corner of France and involving all sections of the masses? In fact one could say that the 'organic unity' would itself bring about the All-national Soviet which would in turn help to spread the Soviets everywhere. Fanciful? Not a bit. It is not even fanciful to say—as I do—that to oppose organic unity is to oppose a strong weapon that can be utilized for the creation of Soviets—to oppose organic unity is to oppose the Soviets!" This is not merely enough, as Stalin would say, to make a cat laugh, or even a horse. It is our contention that it is enough to make the stone image of the Sphinx laugh. An impossibility, you say? Or as Weber would put it: Fanciful? Not a bit!

we want to concern ourselves with in this document—is the fact that Weber and his caucus, who qualified a certain group of comrades as *careerists* (in the cowardly safety of a confidential poison-pen letter which was circulated throughout his faction's ranks), nevertheless *insisted* that these same careerists should have the majority of the leadership of the organization to which he belonged—insisted on it at the CLA convention held a bare five weeks after this letter was written. A revolutionist does not propose to give the leadership of the movement to careerists, who are its worst enemies; it is better to give the leadership to the youngest and most inexperienced militant in the ranks. Instead of leadership, he should give them a fight to drive the careerists out of the movement, or else stand doubly condemned as an irresponsible scoundrel who knows better but holds his tongue.

* * * * *

To the extent that the Weber group has support in the party, it has not gained a single partisan by the methods of open, honest ideological confrontation of its opponents. Its methods are different: it says one thing in letters, in poisonous "information notes" sent out secretly by Abern but which they would never dare put before the party publicly, and says another thing openly. When Satir declares in his statement to the Pittsburgh Plenum that "factionalism is unwarranted at this point and can only impede the party's growth. All factionalism must therefore be checked"—he neglects to add to this pious declaration that there is a Weber faction operating clandestinely, hiding in the bushes and preparing against the day when it can find another "club." When Weber declares in his statement on April 7, 1935, that "it is our duty at this time to prevent any exaggeration of differences to the point where encouragement is given to the building of hard and fast groupings"—he neglects to add to this piece of hypocrisy and sham that he already has a hard and fast faction which is preparing against the day when some differences—any difference!—will enable it to bob up triumphantly as (to quote Gould) "the only group that can come before the party at this juncture and honestly place before the membership for examination" its "record."

When Weber writes to the I.S. that "We felt...that it had become necessary after March to open up the discussion on the French turn, so as to bring about ideological clarification," he neglects to add that not Weber, not Glotzer, not Gould, not Satir, nor any other Weberite, ever translated that "feeling" into a single proposal to have a discussion on the French turn, or a discussion on anything else. When Weber warns pompously in his statement of April 7 against the party being "dragged into pursuing a tail-endist course only to be avoided by the prompt reaction of our leadership to all important events," he neglects to add that not one of the Weberites on or near the National Committee ever made ***one single motion*** in the PC or the NC, as the minutes testify by elaborate silence, that was calculated to put the party "ahead" of events and stop it from being "tail-endist," so that the leadership, of which they were a part, would "react promptly." (Literally! Not one single motion on any phase of party work was ever made by Weber-Glotzer-Satir-Gould up to the June Plenum, i.e., during those six months when, Weber said, the party leadership was following an "opportunist course." Aren't they the men chosen by nature to call us "tail-endists"?)

To the extent that the Weber clique has any political coloration, it represents political sterility, passivity, negativeness, timidity, fear of bold innovation—a species of ***conservative sectarianism.*** Not one single political move has been initiated from their ranks in the two years of their existence, not one singe positive proposal in any field (oh yes, with the exception of Glotzer's motion to cable our greetings to the conference of the new Dutch party...) has emanated from them. We initiated and carried through the fusion with the AWP in all its stages, with never a positive idea contributed by the Weberites, unless one can designate as such the utter skepticism they manifested throughout that period towards the negotiations and the unity. We initiated and carried through, on a sound basis, the fight to endorse the French turn in the CLA. As for the practical work of the organization, up to and including the Minneapolis struggles, they were conspicuous by their absence in body and in ideas, and contributed only the most grudging half-approval of the results after the fact.

In the WP, similarly. Every forward step made by the party was initiated by us or by Muste—in no case by the Weberites. The progressive steps taken by our party on the international field were initiated, in every case, by us, from the January 10, 1935, motion by Cannon to notify the sympathetic parties and groups of our desire to establish fraternal relations with them, down through the Pittsburgh, the June and the October Plenums; at best the Weberites trailed along, with eyes to both sides of the road in the hope of finding another "club" in some ditch. The progressive steps taken by our party in the fight against the Oehlerite cancer were initiated, in every case, and at every stage, by us; at best (only from October on, i.e., at the end) the Weberites trailed along; at worst, i.e., as a rule, they not only interposed themselves between us and the Oehlerites as

a shield for the latter, but helped the sectarians to strike us a few treacherous blows.

The fight to get the party to come out in favor of a left wing in the SP and to do something about it was initiated by us; at best we got perfunctory aid in June from the Weberites; at worst, i.e., as a rule, they joined in the cheap Oehlerite clamor about our "liquidationism." The fight for a realistic, Marxian unity policy in the unemployed field was initiated by us and sabotaged by the Musteites; the Weberites either played possum on the whole issue or else—as is now the case—they sign their names to the shameful avowals of indiscipline and defiance of the party made by the Musteites, to the policy which plays into the hands of the reformists and Stalinists. The fight against Stalinist influences in our party, manifested so crudely in Allentown, was initiated and carried through by us, for a long time together with Muste; when his factional interests caused him to make a 180-degree turn on the Allentown situation, he found the Weberites on hand to help him shield the microbe-bearers of Stalinism.

Now, when we have initiated a new step forward for the forces of the Fourth International in this country, when we propose entry into the SP and YPSL, the Weberites again come forward with their sterile, negative position, in the same dead spirit and with the same arguments—reeking of sectarian timidity (to say nothing of the same factional distortions)—they advanced a year and a half ago against fusion with the AWP. Is it any wonder that the branch they have dominated for two years—Chicago—which they have "led" without contest, continues to suffer from that terrible stagnancy and sterility which is a reflection of the leadership of Weber-Glotzer-Satir; that, with Chicago our second most important political center, the branch simply does not recruit; that it has no contacts at all in the trade unions; that its sale of literature is poorer proportionately than that of any other important branch; that its public meetings are few and far between—in a word, that the pseudo-intransigent conservatism and sterility of the local leadership is like a dead hand on a branch which nevertheless contains a good many virile, healthy elements, especially among the younger comrades, who, once liberated from the lack of initiative and wordy passivity of the Weberite clique, could bound forward towards effective participation in the stream of the living movement.

If we were commanded to give a summary characterization of the Abern-Weber faction, our formula would confine itself to two words that describe its political predisposition and its organizational methods, a ***conservative clique***. The existence of a tumor and the dangers it represents are not made any the more tolerable by the fact that the tumor is a small one. Be its forces large or small in our party—and fortunately they are small and are getting smaller every day that its position is dragged up into the open—it represents an unhealthy and sinister current in our bloodstream—the stream of revolutionary Marxism, which bases itself on principled considerations and operates with tested and honored political methods, which detests clique politics and personal combinationism. Its morals, it manners, its customs, its methods make it an alien system in our movement. We did not combat Oehlerism only to suffer it silently in another form and under another name, but which, in some respects, is worse. If our movement is to grow to its full stature, if it is to measure up to its grand tasks, the Weberite system of politics must be ruthlessly eradicated from the minds of those comrades in our ranks who have been made its victims.

A Final Note: The Muste Group

From every point of view, the Muste group represents a far more significant quantity and quality in the labor and revolutionary movements than do the Weberites. This is not so because Muste knows more than, or even as much as, Weber does about the theory of the permanent revolution, but because he represented to a considerable degree an authentic ***movement*** of class-conscious militants who have evolved from general labor education, trade union progressivism and activism in the class struggle to the ranks of the Bolshevik political movement. Each one of us has evolved in his own way to the point; important is the fact that, despite halts on the road and even excursions into bypaths, the Muste group did not remain standing still but moved to a left-wing position with greater or lesser consistency. Its evolution is, I think, a unique one in modern world labor history, if only because of the fact that it developed to the point that it did principally on the basis of the lessons drawn from empirical experience (in the best sense of the term) in the class struggle, and not so much on the basis of Marxian theory and perspective more or less developed in advance. Precisely therein, however, lies an essential weakness.

Just as we never objected to the Stalinist phrase "social fascism" because many socialists considered it abusive, but because we considered it false, so in every other designation of groups and tendencies we seek to follow the established Marxian precept of applying that term which most accurately describes the political physiognomy of the given movement, always bearing in mind that the term which was invalid yesterday and valid today may become invalid tomorrow, even if for other reasons. In qualifying the AWP and its leadership (more than a year ago) as centrist, we not only did not

designate them thus for the purpose of "abuse" (the very concept is absurd in this connection) but, quite the contrary, as an indication of their ***progressive*** character. Just as the centrism of Stalin is reactionary, for it marks a departure to the right of the Marxian position of the Russian Communist Party of yesterday, so the centrism of the AWP was progressive, for it marked a departure to the left of the position of its precursor, the CPLA. That is why we only smiled patiently at those pseudo-intransigents in our own ranks at that time who appealed to us (presumably "old Bolsheviks") to be on our guard against fusing with "people who will never become communists" (Glotzer), just as we had to shrug our shoulders impatiently at the same pseudo-intransigents who made a bloc with "people who will never become communists" against...us.

Our course with regard to the Musteites was at all times grounded on a clear line, worked out with a long-time perspective, of the closest and most loyal collaboration for the purpose of jointly advancing the movement for the Fourth International, of steering it carefully through its first difficult period, of protecting it from its numerous foes both outside and inside the party. From the point of view of straightforward progress, the first six months of the existence of the party were undoubtedly its most fruitful ones. That was made possible by the loyal collaboration of the Musteites with the Marxian core of the CLA. Our standpoint was, throughout the whole first period (we expressed it more than once), that while we were anxious to facilitate the utmost cooperation with the Weberites, and even with the Oehlerites, the ***main*** basis for the progressive development of the party consisted in the collaboration between the elements grouped around Muste and those grouped around us, not the ***whole*** basis, but the ***main*** basis. It was on the foundation of this joint, intimate work that the Muste group, in that period, made a consistently progressive contribution to the advancement of our movement.

The sharp, totally uncalled-for rupture of this collaboration which was effected on Muste's initiative at and after the June Plenum indicates above all—and we are perfectly ready to acknowledge the fact—that we had overestimated the speed and the quality of Muste's development from an uncertain centrist position on political questions to the more sure-footed and consistent position of Marxism. Muste, brought face to face with the need of drawing another, and more significant, logical conclusion from the whole course he had been pursuing in common with us, drew up short, balked, stood stock still, then moved backward, and, because we were pressing for another step forward, the breach necessarily occurred. And it occurred on the most crucial question then confronting the party: the need of taking another step against the insolent provocations of the reactionary current in our party, the Oehler anti-Trotskyists.

That our collaboration with Muste was indisputably loyal and free from any trace of deception has already been adequately established. Muste only puts himself in a rather dubious position when he charges us with disloyalty, concealment and duplicity on the basis of that very letter of Cannon to him in Toledo in which Cannon sets down, clearly and unambiguously, the facts of the situation and the course which he proposes the party shall take, and invites Muste to talk things over with him upon his return to the Center. Not until the open break at the plenum itself did Muste ever so much as hint to us his feeling that we were guilty of those wildly-hurled, irresponsible charges which he subsequently levelled at us. After six months of unbroken collaboration with us, he did not think it possible, or necessary, between his return from Toledo and the opening of the plenum, to draw us aside in conference and, by comradely discussion, at least attempt to arrive at an understanding and mutual agreement.

Instead, he turned to those whom he had denounced three months ago as "sectarian and factional" and whom he would be compelled to denounce three days later as "slanderers"—the Oehlerites—for the purpose of carrying out an action on the eve of the plenum which self-restraint advises us to qualify as...not quite loyal and hardly responsible. What we refer to is dealt with at length in the statements made by Muste and McKinney concerning their conference with the socialist Y., as recorded in the minutes of the control commission of the June Plenum. The Oehlerites had whispered a venomous lie in Muste's ear about Cannon. It apparently never occurred to Muste to report this to Cannon and ask him for an accounting, or even to report it, more formally, to the PC and demand an accounting from Cannon there. Merely on the say-so of a couple of proved calumniators, Muste and McKinney proceeded to meet with the non-party member Y., without notifying the party or its PC, without obtaining their permission, and, to top it all, together with Stamm and Oehler. Even after this meeting was held, Muste did not report it either to the PC or to Cannon. We heard of it secondhand, confronted Muste with it on the eve of the plenum, and only then we were told of the whole sordid action. The interesting minutes read:

> West: Did you report your conference with Y. to Cannon?
>
> Muste: No, M., the contact with Y., mentioned to Cannon subsequently the fact of our conference, and when this question was brought up at the conference at

> Cannon's home a few nights ago I reported on it in the same manner that I have now done.
>
> West: Did you believe that holding a meeting together with Oehler and Stamm served this purpose?
>
> Muste: Yes, there was no other way to check up on Oehler's and Stamm's statements except in the presence of Y. where discrepancies would have been revealed and could have been immediately followed up.

Yes, there *were* at least two other ways "to check up." One was to ask Cannon for his version of what had happened; the other was to invite Cannon to this conference with Y. After all, it was Cannon who was really being "checked up on." But it seems that it never occurred to Muste, who took Oehler and Stamm along to meet with Y., to invite Cannon along so that he too might see to it that "discrepancies would have been revealed and could have been immediately followed up." In two blunt words, Muste's conduct was irresponsible and disloyal.

That there is nothing maliciously disloyal in Muste's conduct we are perfectly ready to acknowledge. For that matter, it is not very important. What is important is the fact that, especially during and since the June Plenum, Muste revealed a relapse into the centrist vacillations from which, when collaborating with us and our line, he had been progressively moving away; he revealed an inability to analyze clearly so as to have a political line that would carry him in one consistent direction for a measurable period of time; he revealed an inability to connect his yesterday logically with his today, so that every morning he had to make a sharp turn, unload the responsibility for everything he did and said yesterday, and hunt about for somebody to blame for having "misled" him. These are not the traits of a man with a consistent political position.

Reflect on the following telling gyrations:

In March, he stood firmly with us, designating Oehler as sectarian and factional, and rejecting Cohen's criticisms for what they really were: formalistic, unreal, sterile.

In June, he was almost indistinguishable from Oehler, would not allow a single, even mildly critical resolution to be adopted against him, poured all the abuse at his command at us, and a week later organized not merely a bloc, but a faction with...Cohen.

A couple of weeks after standing like a Horatius at the bridge against any censure of Oehler, he was compelled to make a motion in the PC to censure Oehler.

Two months later, he broke with Cannon and found himself allied—O fate!—with the Weberites. A couple of weeks thereafter, at the October Plenum, we all joined in a bloc, based on unanimously adopted resolutions, against Oehler. Before a month had passed, the bloc was once more disrupted by Muste and Weber, who launched first a sly and then an open caucus campaign against us.

What political consistency would the graph of this mercurial line reveal?

Take the case of the struggle against the Oehlerites. We joined issue with the Oehlerites in Pittsburgh and adopted, together, a ***political*** resolution, clear, plain, simple, obvious, of condemnation of the factional sectarians. A brief three months later, Muste declared at the June Plenum: "A number of Plenum members, not being acquainted with the past history of the CLA and with Comrade Cannon's organizational methods, voted for this resolution in ignorance of its full implications. Duplicity in Comrade Cannon's procedure insofar as the former AWP comrades are concerned was, in our estimation, involved in this action." Three months after this statement, Muste had to expel the Oehlerites, who, politically speaking, wrote this statement for him, because in it was contained their line, their arguments, their attack.

At the June Plenum we stated that the Oehlerites represented an anti-Trotskyist faction, i.e., anti-Marxist. This entirely correct, 100 percent confirmed and purely political estimate was denounced by Muste in his statement: "The attempt of the Cannon-Shachtman faction to make it appear that the plenum is now confronted with the issue, e.g., of 'Trotskyism' vs. 'anti-Trotskyism' is another illustration of the utterly unprincipled way in which these leading comrades constantly twist issues." (By the way, what did Weber & Co., who knew then that our estimate of the Oehlerites was correct, just as everybody, including Muste, knows today that it is correct, what did Weber & Co. do to correct Muste's view at the plenum? Did they solidarize themselves with us? Of course not!)

We proposed a bloc with Muste (and Weber) to fight Oehler and Oehlerism, on the basis of a common political line of solidarity with the main stream of the Fourth International. They replied by drawing up a common resolution with Oehler, acceptable to the latter but not to us; in other words, they made a bloc with Oehler ***against*** us.

We proposed to direct the fire of the plenum against the Oehlerites as the main danger to the party. Muste answered our proposal by writing about us in his statement: "No solution of political questions is possible, nor healthy party activity of any kind, so long as these stupid, factional, brutal, individualistic and unprincipled methods are used by party leaders." No censure of Oehler—God forbid—for that might offend him; but not abuse strong enough to characterize those with whom Muste had worked in perfect harmony for six

months. Where was Muste's fire directed? Read his statement over again today: ***all*** the attacks are against us, but ***not one single word*** even of implied criticism of Oehler! Read the January 10, 1936, *Internal Bulletin* of the party: 19 solid pages of the Muste line between June and October, and every one of the 19 pages filled exclusively with attacks on us—every page, every paragraph, every line. (To be strictly accurate, at the bottom of page 8 is one single sentence of uneasy apology: "In order to avoid all misunderstanding (!) I wish to state again that I am not arguing for the Oehlerite political position." It's a good thing he does "state" it; otherwise....) In a word, Muste lost all sense of proportion and of political value and concentrated ***all*** his fire against us, who were fighting the Oehlerite cancer. Again, to be strictly accurate, not all ***his*** fire, because he had none of his own; he merely repeated two-thirds of the Oehler platform and signed his name to it.

In his latest *Internal Bulletin* articles, Muste charges us (another plagiarism from the Oehlerites!) with having "deliberately started a series of measures beginning with the public attack by Cannon on Zack calculated to bring about the expulsion of the Oehlerites from the party." But on June 4 he voted for, signed and sent out a statement of the PC which specifically refuted this charge! How does Muste make the two contradictory statements to which he put his name jibe? He does not seem to attach any particular importance to the political position to which he commits himself when he signs his name to a political document. In June he repudiated his March position on Oehler; in October he repudiated his June position on Oehler; in the *Internal Bulletin* article he repudiated his June 4 position on the Zack affair; on May 27 he "postponed until after the (June) Plenum so that it may consider the political line of the Plenum" and now in the *Internal Bulletin* (page 4) he complains that "Cannon-Shachtman insisted that it must be a political convention for dealing with political issues"; at one meeting he voted for the system of proportional representation and voting we proposed for the district convention, and a few meetings later he proposed to rearrange it entirely so as to get another delegate or two; etc., etc.

What happened in all these cases? Was this innocent Gretchen always "misled" by the Mephistophelean Cannon? Assuming that he has the unfortunate habit of slipping easily into sin, may we be pardoned for pointing out that it is not the business of leaders to be misled, but to lead? And that in order to do that, they must at least try to maintain a consistent line for a given period of time, otherwise they will not lead, but flounder? And that in order to have a consistent line, they must be guided by considerations of Marxian principle, and not by psychological considerations and considerations of personal prestige?

Another qualification for consistent leadership is a fairly good memory, that enables one to recall today what he said yesterday, so that he is not constantly in conflict with himself. In the January 10, 1936, *Internal Bulletin* Muste presents the following (thoroughly Oehleristic) version of the origin of the internal struggle in our party:

> The Oehlerites were by no means alone in instigating whatever turmoil existed in the party in the early weeks of their existence. Their ***open aggressiveness*** dated from the West resolution and the Shachtman-Swabeck support of it—in other words, from the time when the disputed political issue was first definitely posed in the party. Furthermore, the party press from the outset had carried material implying approval and support of the French turn.

Wrong on both counts! And the most direct refutation of this Oehlerite version is offered by none other than Muste himself—but by a different Muste, by one—how shall we put it?—whose memory of the "early weeks" was somewhat fresher and more than somewhat more accurate. In a report and discussion at the PC meeting of April 1, 1935, on the New York membership meeting of the preceding day, taken down in stenographic summary by Muste's secretary, Comrade D. Prenner, from whose file copy I quote, Muste had the following to say:

> It has been suggested by Oehler (and repeated faithfully by Muste four months later!—MS) that controversy was not aroused in party until West resolution came up. This is incorrect. West resolution came up at first meeting after my return from tour when already over the *New Militant* and other matters a terrific uproar had been created in the party. Oehler, Stamm, etc. were guilty of direct violation of discipline in making the West resolution known to membership and in not openly and vigorously combatting outrageous misstatement as to its contents. I opposed the W. resolution. Its perspective is in my opinion thoroughly incorrect. He did not, however, propose that the party go into the SP and definitely provided for no watering down of WP principles.
>
> Oehler, Stamm, etc. permitted a disgraceful exhibition of those in political agreement with them at beginning of Active Workers Conference in Pittsburgh, thus violating their responsibility to the NC and made impossible the objective discussion of the political issues which they are constantly demanding. Rightly or wrongly the Plenum made a decision. It was their business to accept the decision and, particularly after they were given an opportunity to present minority viewpoint at the NY membership meeting, to make it clear to the membership and particularly to their own political supporters that the Plenum decision must nevertheless be accepted. They once again openly violated NC and PC discipline in stating that sending Oehler to Illinois was an organizational measure against him. Their line would mean not taking

into the party any worker not already completely trained in Bolshevik-Leninist theory and by struggle forcing out of the party any such worker. This is an impossible conception for building the party. Workers have to be drawn in and their education carried on within the party. This can be done and a disciplined revolutionary party rather than a sect created provided the leading elements in the party are thoroughly trained, disciplined and loyal to the conception of a Leninist party. The course being pursued by Oehler and Stamm means forcing healthy elements away from the WP rather than creating the atmosphere in which they are trained in correct principles and firmly attached to them. If the course succeeds, then by weakening the WP they will force it into the SP instead of accomplishing the purpose they claim to have in mind.

How different in approach, in fact-stating, in analysis and in conclusion, how infinitely correct was Muste when he was being "misled" by a Marxian line! How pathetic it is to see him now, warming over the cold and soggy potatoes of Oehlerism!

As for the second count, his memory fails him again. It is true that after the June Plenum, just before Weber's eloquence finally convinced Muste in favor of the French turn, Muste, jointly with Oehler, censured us for printing articles "supporting the French turn" (by the way, what does Weber, who opposed the censure and the arguments Muste made for it, say now to the fact that his partner continues to charge us with this "crime"?). But the censure was adopted not for objective reasons, but for purely factional ones. Before Muste had a factional axe to grind against us, he paid no attention to the groundless repetitions by the Oehlerites that under our editorship the French turn was being favored. Thus, the PC minutes of April 15 record a protest by Stamm against an article on the French situation in the *New Militant* of April 13, a protest similar to the one on whose basis we were censured a few months later. But ***at that time*** Muste made no motion to censure Cannon, nor did Stamm make a motion to censure Cannon, because he knew he could not then get Muste's support. Muste's (read: Oehler's) version No. 2 simply will not hold water against his entirely objective version No. 1 last April!

Or take the situation in Allentown. Muste now seeks to present matters as if we had, somehow, invented a "situation" in Allentown for the purpose of hounding "honest workers," or that whatever trivialities may have been involved there, our "arbitrary" decisions kept making them worse. Yet the Allentown problem is as old as our party, and has always revolved around one central point: the inability or unwillingness of some of the local comrades to resist the infiltration of Stalinist ideas into our movement, their lack of understanding of how dangerous to the working class Stalinism is, their lack of understanding of how to combat it, and the fact that at times they become the direct bearers of Stalinism in our ranks.

As early as January 13, 1935, the PC heard a report from its representative, Oehler, as to the situation in Allentown, and established the need of "assisting the comrades in clarification on the question of united-front activities with the CP and the Unemployed Councils and particularly against the CP labor party agitation." Time and again, the PC concerned itself with the Allentown situation, and always with the same problem: how to combat Stalinism, or more accurately, how to get Reich and Hallett to stiffen a bit against Stalinist encroachments. Up to October 28, when the PC sent out a statement on Allentown to all party branches, and even as late as November 11, the problem continued to occupy us all. And what is more, without a single exception, the PC was always unanimous in its decisions. We made no proposal that Muste ever rejected as "arbitrary," or for any other reasons; Muste never made any proposals that we rejected on any grounds.

Now, however, confronted with the fact that his faction strength is melting away from him, Muste sacrifices the interests of the party for the presumed interests of holding together his Allentown caucus and rushes to the defense of the same Reich from whom the PC found itself compelled, time and time again, to dissociate itself. He covers up, shields, condones the most defiant violations of elementary communist discipline. Instead of helping the Allentown comrades advance towards a revolutionary Marxian education, he coddles them, tickles them, tells them what fine, upright, sturdy proletarians they are and that, being honest workers, they have a right to make grave errors and to strike stiff blows at the party, especially when they have caucus leaders who will shield them not merely from disciplinary measures, but from any efforts to correct their wrong line, dispel their suspicions and prejudices, and help in their education as revolutionary Marxists. Muste doesn't educate his followers; he flatters them. And workers, however honest they are, require not flattery from their leaders, but a correct and straightforward line of policy. And centrist vacillation, doubling on your own tracks, constant self-repudiation, are hardly a satisfactory substitute for a consistent revolutionary line.

Conclusion

Those who find in what has been written here only an account of a faction fight, of sectarian-circle strife, of a tempest in a teapot, will only cause the author to doubt the efficacy with which he brought forward his central point. Yet we believe that it is sufficiently clear for most

if not all our militants, above all our youth, to discern and understand. Precisely because we want to uproot the last remnants of what has become the reactionary features of sectarian-circle existence, precisely because we want to crush the spirit and methods of intrigue, precisely because we want to redouble the preparations for embarking on the broader field of the class struggle, do we stress so much the main point of this document. Dozens of the details in the document are, in themselves, unimportant. They are adduced here for two reasons: to put an end to some of the corridor versions of events, and to illuminate or illustrate a far more important point.

We have before us a truly breath-taking job: the building of a powerful Bolshevik party in the citadel of world reaction. But this party will never be built—or if it is built, it will never stand up in a crisis—unless it has as its spinal column a steel cadre: hard, tough, firm, flexible, tempered. The two are inseparable: a cadre without a party is a skeleton without flesh or muscle; a party without a cadre is a mass of gelatine that anybody's finger can go through. And how else will the Bolshevik cadre be tempered unless, on every occasion, it has hammered into it more and more of the wisdom we have tried to learn from the great teachers: a deep respect for principle and a hatred for cliquism and intrigue, an equally deep regard for objective judgement of problems and a suspicious intolerance of subjective and personal considerations, a political approach to all political problems and a political solution for them. Now more than ever before are these indispensable, for the revolutionists function today amid a veritable sea of corruption and decay of the old movements, the poisonous fumes of which cannot but be felt in our own ranks unless we constantly counteract them.

Slowly, but surely, the basic elements of the Marxian cadre are being assembled; it has not been a work of days or even months, and it is yet far from completed. In the decisive leadership of the party today are represented not merely the best traditions and forces of the American communist movement, and the revolutionary movement before it, but also the strongest concentration of forces of those, old and new, who have entered the movement of the Bolshevik-Leninists in this country in the last seven years. The fact that the ranks of our group comprise elements from the old Cannon faction, the Shachtman faction, the Carter group (even such "splinter" groups as the old Field faction, the Garrett-Glee faction, etc.), plus such elements from the old AWP as Selander, Ramuglia and West (of the NC), the Toledo militants, half the Allentown militants, most of the NY activists—all these indicate that you have here no personal combination, no chance clique that the first real wind will disperse, but the concentration of determined Marxian forces on the basis of a ***consistent, principled, political line.*** The scattering of the Muste group to the four corners of the political globe is a warning sign of the inefficaciousness of a vacillating line as an integrating force. The melting away of the Weber group is a sign that a clique can hold together only when it operates in the dark, that combinationism, however clever it may appear for a time, has a disintegrating effect.

Unless all indications are false, our party is preparing in its overwhelming and decisive majority to take an audacious step forward. Audacious, and at the same time hazardous. Taking this step will not diminish our problems, but multiply them, with this advantage, to be sure, that we shall have a far larger arena in which to solve them. This step would prove our complete undoing, however, and no problem would be solved, if we did not proceed, tomorrow as today and yesterday, like the revolutionary Marxian internationalists we aim to remain. If we do, we shall make great progress, and if we fail we shall be hurled back for years. If the stress we have repeatedly laid on those main lines that have divided our party's ranks for the last year, and the CLA before it, serves to clarify our problems in the minds of comrades who have not always understood them fully, then this document will have accomplished its purpose of being an additional guarantee that the bigger problems we shall face tomorrow will prove easier of solution.

Appendix I

Resolution on the Organizational Report of the National Committee

30 November 1934

The outgoing National Committee has been in office for three years since the Second National Convention of the League and is virtually identical with the Committee that has led the organization during the entire six years of its existence. As such it must be judged from the standpoint of its achievements as well as of its shortcomings.

I. On the positive side, the Third National Convention records the following facts of outstanding importance:

a. The National Committee led the organization throughout the whole period of its existence, maintained a continuity of leadership, avoided the organizational splits which have disrupted and disorganized so many of the other national sections, conducted a firm political struggle against disintegrating elements (Weisbord, Field, etc.), succeeded in isolating them by political methods and eliminating them from our ranks without serious convulsions, such as similar elements introduced into various European sections;

b. The National Committee directed the work of the organization in such a manner as made possible the increase of the League membership from a scattered handful at its inception, to its present strength, and finally established it as a national organization, together with a national youth organization;

c. It maintained a firm line of principle and led the work of consolidating a strong cadre of Bolshevik-Leninists well-equipped with our basic ideas and principles for the task facing them in the new party;

d. It enormously aided the development of these cadres and a broad group of sympathizers around our organization by the systematic publication of the fundamental documents and works of Comrade Trotsky;

e. In the face of the greatest difficulties and sacrifices, it continued uninterrupted the publication of the *Militant* as our weekly organ, an achievement which proved to be beyond the power of any other independent political groupings;

f. It firmly supported the progressive revolutionary current in our international organization and gave timely assistance in the solution of the internal crises in other sections on the Bolshevik-Leninist basis;

g. It led the organization unitedly and without internal difficulties in the turn from the position of a faction of the CI to the road of an independent organization working for the creation of new revolutionary parties and a Fourth International;

h. It overcame, at the same time, with the aid of our international organization, the deep internal crisis and factional fight which threatened the existence of the League, succeeded in liquidating the old factions as the resolution of the International Secretariat demanded, and in effecting a working political and organizational collaboration of the most responsible and influential comrades from all the former factions (Cannon, Shachtman, Carter groups)—an accomplishment which alone made possible the fruitful progress of the past year and without which the League would have fallen victim to disintegration and splits and a complete impotence for the great tasks facing it. Without the liquidation of the old faction fight and the loyal collaboration of the leading members of the National Committee from both sides on a political basis, such as has been effected during the past year, our three main accomplishments—the Minneapolis strike, the launching of our theoretical organ, the work for fusion into a new party—would have been impossible;

Above all, the convention establishes the fact that the policy and leadership of the National Committee has brought our organization today to the point of fusion with the American Workers Party on a satisfactory principled basis for the launching of the first party of the Fourth International—an event of the greatest international historical significance.

II. On the negative side, the National Convention is obliged to register a series of defects and shortcomings on the part of the National Committee which require the criticism of the membership of the League:

a. The Committee failed to attain a good and necessary collective work which would have made it possible for it and for the organization to react more promptly and effectively to situations and problems confronting it, tolerated individualistic methods, gave way to internal dissension which at one time endangered the unity of the League and adversely affected its striking power;

b. Throughout the six years of our existence, the leading Committee carried on the administrative work of the organization poorly and inefficiently, failed to give the branches the necessary organizational and informational guidance, or else failed to give it in time;

c. Adequate contact was not maintained between the National Committee and the membership, to the detriment of the work of both, so that the National Committee was not sufficiently sensitive to the feelings and requirements of the membership and the latter was left without the necessary political aid in the solution of their problem and the organizational direction of their work;

d. The Committee was especially lax in its international duties, failing to give the international organization sufficient information about the development and problems of the League, failing even to supply the International Secretariat with a minimum of material aid so imperative for its functioning;

e. The National Committee was slow in reacting to events and issues, often giving its position after the event and in many cases failing to take a position at all. This sluggishness communicated itself to the membership and contributed to the development of tendencies towards passivity and routine in the organization. In addition, the NC gave inadequate attention and aid to our youth movement which was thus compelled to develop its activity largely by itself;

f. In general the National Committee throughout the six years of the existence of our organization did not function as a rounded and well-organized collective leadership, which would have served enormously to consolidate the League and to enhance the prestige of the NC itself. The National Convention, therefore, demands of its leading body, individually and collectively, that it make a radical correction and improvement in its habits and methods of work, and above all that systematic collaboration, politically, and organizationally, be established in the new party.

III. The foregoing criticism is directed at the National Committee as a whole, not merely at its functioning members in the National office. Comrades Swabeck, Shachtman and Cannon, who carried the main political responsibility since the Second National Convention and led the struggle for the political line of the League and who, together with Comrade Oehler, carried the entire burden of the administrative responsibility for the National Committee, are herein specifically criticized for grave faults of commission and omission in the conduct of their work.

But the other members of the National Committee—Abern, Spector, and Glotzer, Edwards (alternate), Morgenstern (alternate), Dunne, Skoglund, and Coover (alternate)—each and every one of them must also be taken to account by the organization at this convention.

As for Comrades Dunne, Skoglund and Coover—the convention declares that these comrades have conducted systematic and unremitting activity in the trade-union movement, have thereby brought credit and glory to our organization, not only on a national but on an international scale. At the same time, although far removed from the center and unable to function in it directly, they have at all times carried out their responsibilities as non-resident members and have given the center loyal support in its work. If they have not functioned directly in the center, it has not been because of a refusal on their part, but because they were not called upon to do so. As for Comrade Oehler the convention records that he carried out functions assigned to him by the NC, quitting private employment on two occasions for this purpose and, in general collaborated with other functioning members of the NC. Even during the heated struggle between him and the majority of the NC over important and clearly defined political questions, a measure of responsible collaboration with him was possible. Against Comrade Oehler the convention records the fact that he formed a faction in the League despite the fact that normal democratic processes were never denied to him.

As for Comrade Morgenstern who was elected at the last convention to the responsible position as an alternate to the National Committee, the Third Convention records the fact that his personal conduct was not in keeping with such a responsibility and called forth the severe censure of the National Committee and his simultaneous resignation from it. Following that, his conduct in the Philadelphia organization and his entirely inadequate personal activity deprived that organization of the political and organizational contribution which he owed to it and contributed heavily to impeding its growth.

As for Comrades Abern, Glotzer, Spector and Edwards (alternate)—these comrades were guilty of greater derelictions than any other members of the Committee. Comrade Abern failed to collaborate with the other members of the National Committee in a comradely manner, although no political differences among them were discerned which would in any way justify the sharp and even poisonous antagonism which he continually engendered, even after the unanimous adoption of the resolution of the International Secretariat calling for a cessation of the old factional fight. He refused to take any kind of responsibility, either political or organizational, assigned to him by the National Committee. Even his present post was assumed by him, only after the most vigorous intervention of other Committee members who for months encountered his stubborn refusal. He stirred up antagonism against the National Committee without any established political foundation. He absented himself regularly from general membership meetings at which

the most serious problems of the League [were dealt with], with or without excuse, and repeatedly and persistently refused to speak for the League at public meetings, although constantly requested to do so by the New York organization. He gathered around himself a clique of discontented comrades without visible political grounds. His whole destructive, negative and spiteful position is epitomized in his attitude towards the present convention, the final gathering of the organization at which a six-years' balance sheet is being drawn.

Comrade Glotzer, who has been one of the most insistent critics of the most obvious shortcomings of the National Committee, failed to preserve his position as a responsible functionary, together with others, at the center, to which he had at first been summoned for the purpose of strengthening the weight, the collectivity, the functioning and the efficiency of the Resident Committee. As a member of the National Committee, having no serious differences with its political line and presenting none contrary to it, he nevertheless failed to maintain his solidarity with the Committee which, from a Bolshevik standpoint, would logically follow from such a relationship. Devoting himself mainly to criticism, in itself largely justified, he directed his attacks exclusively at those comrades who carried responsibilities and tried to function, even if poorly, while completely ignoring or shielding from all criticism the scandalous conduct of Abern with whom, indeed, he associated himself. At this convention, he even went so far as to associate himself with Abern, who has no right to speak at all on this matter, in a condemnation of the functioning Committee members. He appeared at the convention not as a member of the National Committee with which he is presumably in political solidarity, but as a leading spokesman for a clique which includes Abern and which has no political platform of its own.

Comrade Edwards, whose political knowledge and experience in the revolutionary and labor movements entitled us to expect the political attitude of a leader, completely failed the National Committee in this respect, concerned himself with minor grievances, refuses to give the Resident Committee the solidarity and support which ought to follow from his membership on the National Committee and its agreement with its main line, and instead associates himself with the conduct of Comrade Glotzer and through him of Comrade Abern. In addition, he was far from measuring up to the activity on a local scale which the Chicago organization was entitled to receive from an alternate to the National Committee who has the political qualifications of Comrade Edwards.

Comrade Spector, even if excused from direct participation in the work of the Resident Committee, by virtue of his leadership and work in the Canadian section, nevertheless owed the Resident Committee the obligation of political solidarity and the influence of his prestige and personal relationships with other individual members to facilitate that loyal and comradely collaboration without which all talk of a collective leadership is a mockery. The convention regretfully establishes the fact that Comrade Spector appears to have exerted his influence in a contrary direction, devoting himself to attacks on the Resident Committee shielding Abern from criticism and identifying himself with a clique against the National Committee which has no political platform or basis.

IV. The convention condemns clique tendencies, personal combinations, the shielding of individuals from just criticism, and the one-sided criticism of others cut of personal considerations and out-worn factional reminiscences. The convention categorically demands the dissolution of any clique or factional grouping and the consolidation of the entire League and of the entire leadership on the basis of the political decisions of this convention.

James P. Cannon
Arne Swabeck
Max Shachtman

Appendix II

Letter by Cannon to International Secretariat

15 August 1935

Dear Comrades:

After too much delay—for which I acknowledge an inexcusable fault—I send you herewith a summary of our party situation. At the present moment the chief interest centers in the internal conflict, since the outcome of this conflict will determine the future course of the party and its capacity to utilize the great opportunities which are opening up before it.

The differences and the groupings were recorded at the June Plenum, although not yet in completed form. The forthcoming September Plenum will define the issues still more clearly in preparation for the discussion which will precede the party convention in December.

The system of ideas and methods worked out by our international movement and the cadres which have been assembled around them are put to a complicated test in our party struggle. This experience ought to be useful not only to us but also to the other sections which have yet to undertake a fusion with centrist elements. At one and the same time we have to fight the sterile sectarians—conservative passivity masked by verbal intransigence—which cannot understand or reconcile itself to the turn from a propaganda circle to political mass work, and a specific form of centrism represented by a part of the former AWP (Muste group) which is still far from understanding the Declaration of Principles which they signed jointly with us. We also have to contend with the unprincipled politics of the group of Weber and Glotzer who profess to agree with us on all the principled questions but always combine in one way or another with those who hold opposite opinions in order to fight what they call our "organizational methods." Up until now these three groups have not been able to formulate a common resolution on a single political question, but in practice they work as a bloc against us on all the organizational questions.

The different positions have been put before the membership for discussion. In the New York District, which comprises one-third of the party membership, there has been a thoroughgoing discussion which culminated in the District Convention last weekend. Our tendency (Cannon-Shachtman resolutions) received a clear majority over the other three groups combined in elections conducted on the basis of proportional representation. We secured 20 delegates against seven for the Oehler group and two for the Muste group. The Weber-Glotzer group failed to elect a single delegate, having secured only twelve scattered votes in the branch elections. From reports we have received it appears that we will also have a decisive majority in the national organization.

The Party Groupings

Cannon-Shachtman group—Ours is the "orthodox" tendency which aims to apply the principles and tactics of the ICL as they are formulated in the Declaration of Principles without "modifications." We take the international question as our point of departure, insist on close and loyal collaboration with the ICL in practical work, without unnecessary delay, for the building of the Fourth International. This attitude was concretized in the question of the Open Letter for the Fourth International. We took a determined stand for the WP to sign the letter without putting any impossible conditions and without delaying the issuance of the letter unduly. In short, we construe the independence of the WP as a formal relationship which does not in any way change our fundamental political solidarity with the ICL.

In the present deep ferment of the Socialist Party we see the possibility of crystallizing a serious left wing which, if it takes the right political line, can be brought to a break with the SP and a fusion with us. To this end we propose an active policy designed to aid this left socialist crystallization. To that end we devote considerable space in our press to the crisis in the SP, direct a heavy fire against the centrist "Militants," strive to push the proletarian tendency forward to collision with them and, at the same time, strive to inoculate the left socialists against Stalinism. We have had a good success with this latter and, in general, exert quite a little influence on certain strata of the left socialists. We are accused of preparing an entry of the WP into the Socialist Party. But this is not true at all. We simply do not want to leave the evolution of the left socialists to the well-known "historic process"; we want a policy of active intervention and an unremitting striving for corrections in the SP which can become the starting point for a fraction on the platform of the Fourth International and, consequently, an eventual unification with us. As a part of this work we demand that the WP seize every opportunity for united-front actions and practical cooperation with the left socialists.

Our group represents the basic cadres of the former Communist League plus a good section of the former AWP, including two members of the National Committee—West and Ramuglia. These two comrades led the fight in the AWP for the fusion. West (Burnham) is the co-editor of the *New International*; Ramuglia is the president of the National Unemployed League, the principal mass organization under the leadership of the party.

Muste group—The present position of this group represents a relapse from the more-or-less consistently progressive position it took in uniting with us to form the WP and in cooperation with us in the first six months of the new party. In order to unite with us on a program of revolutionary Marxism, Muste had to break first with Hardman, a crude Menshevik who played a leading role in the AWP at its inception and exerted a corrupting influence in the proletarian elements in the ranks. Later came the withdrawal from the party of Budenz, Muste's closest co-worker in former times, because he despaired of being able to impose his nationalistic program on the party. After a few feeble protests against "Trotskyism"—the standard phobia of all opportunists—he left the party. Several others, none of them of any importance, followed him. The proletarian elements, including the highly qualified mass workers who had been personally attached to Budenz, remained with the party. During this period Muste took a consistent position and cooperated closely with us. We, on our part, cooperated loyally with him and resisted the attempt of the Oehler group to convert the campaign against the "right wing," as they designated the Muste group, into a sport. We followed a deliberate policy of education and assimilation and thereby succeeded in isolating Budenz in the course of a few months. At the same time we presented a solid front with the Muste group against the sectarian and ultra-factional activities of the Oehler group.

Muste broke with us suddenly, and without previous notice or any serious political reason, on the eve of the June Plenum. After having previously agreed (in correspondence from Toledo) with the proposal to sign the Open Letter for the Fourth International he began to invent objections and provisions for delay, rewriting, securing more signatures, etc., the purport of which could only be to delay the matter indefinitely. A study of the June Plenum resolutions on this question will be illuminating. On the question of the SP Muste took a position of unbridled radicalism reminiscent of the attitude taken by the right wing of the French Communist Party in regard to the united front in 1922. This brought him suddenly to a virtual bloc with the Oehler group, also reminiscent of the joint opposition of the right and the left to the united-front tactics in the early days of the Comintern. This right-about-face cost him the support of fully half of the former members of the AWP in New York where the plenum discussions were held openly before the membership.

At bottom, however, the present position of Muste represents a yielding to the pressure of the conservative and even reactionary tendencies of some of the former AWP elements on the question of internationalism. The Budenz agitation still has echoes in the party. Budenz wants an *American* party which will abolish capitalism by the simple device of an amendment to the constitution (literally), at the same time he—God knows why—is fiercely opposed to any mention of the Socialist Party and has a horror of "Trotskyism" which is the way he spells internationalism. Muste—and this to be sure does him credit—has written a public criticism of Budenz in a series of articles in the *New Militant* and, from a formal standpoint, has complied with the provisions of our Declaration of Principles in regard to the work for the Fourth International. But since the June Plenum he has drawn farther away from us.

He appears to see in the Oehler group a counterweight to us and gives them more and more protection against our political attacks. Incidentally, he falls more and more into their position. This complicates the struggle against this group which is heading toward a break with the party. We do not find it possible to yield on the political questions, but we are careful to avoid any sharpening of the struggle with the Muste group and reiterate our readiness to resume the collaboration in joint leadership on the basis that obtained until Muste broke it off. We find it necessary, however, to wage the most uncompromising struggle against the Oehler group and also against the Weber group whose unprincipled combinationism corrupts the party and obstructs the work of assembling cadres of principled fighters. To our proposals for conciliation and collaboration of the two main groups—our group and the Muste group—Muste counterposes a program of general conciliation of ***all*** the groups. In practice this results in a bloc of the three against us. We learned from the great teachers, and supplemented this instruction by our own experience, the folly of trying to reconcile the irreconcilable. With the Muste group alone it would be feasible to make practical compromises and concessions up to a certain point; with the Oehler group this would only deepen and aggravate the party conflict and cause it to reappear shortly in worse form.

Oehler group—This group is an emanation of the international tendency thrown to the surface at the time of the French turn. It combines the hopeless formalism and sterility of Lhuillier and Vereecken with the treachery of Bauer. At one time in the early days after the fusion

this group assumed threatening proportions in New York; it came forward as the "left wing," and it appeared to many comrades that we were following too careful and moderate a policy in dealing with the deviations of certain elements of the former AWP, Budenz, etc. Since the issues have been brought into the open since the plenum, however, and we have taken the fight to the membership, the Oehler group has been shown up in its true colors. Its recruiting power has long since been lost, it has become isolated and has begun to break up. Two members of the group made an open break at the New York District Convention and revealed the split program of the leaders and also the fact that a large section of the group is against the split. They had gone so far as to make all the plans to publish a separate international bulletin of their own despite the fact that they have free access to the internal bulletin and the international bulletin of the party. According to the reports of the two comrades they expect to take about 100 comrades with them in the split, but 50 would be nearer the mark.

They carry on an extremely provocative campaign of slander against the ICL, designating it as a capitulator to the Social Democracy, and argue formalistically, that since we support the French turn we must, willy-nilly, apply it in the same way here by entering the Socialist Party. They have 60 supporters in the New York District, almost entirely inexperienced people. In the rest of the country they have very little support. Their main campaign—since the defection of Muste, their sole campaign—is directed against the French turn and against the whole policy of the ICL. In their attacks on the ICL they deliberately calculate on the prejudices and concealed antagonism maintained by some of the Musteites to the internationalism of the Bolshevik-Leninists. Their agitation at the June Plenum and since, as well as the agitation of some of the Muste group, has had a decidedly reactionary tinge. Muste himself avoids any crude expressions along this line, but does not restrain it in his supporters. A recent motion brought forward in the Political Committee criticizing the *New Militant* for carrying too much international material had this motivation.

The Oehler group had been inspired to a large extent by Bauer and falls into similar contradictions; it also exhibits the same lack of fundamental loyalty. Prior to the fusion the Oehlerites opposed it on the ground that we would be swallowed up by the centrists of the AWP; now they have no difficulty in allying themselves with the same centrists against us. In the first months of the fusion they waged an unrestrained campaign against the "right wing"; now they strive in every way to combine with them against us. To hear them talk and to read their faction material it would appear that there is just one real enemy of the international revolution—the "Trotskyists."

Weber group—This group is more properly described as a ***clique*** which motivates itself in internal relations exclusively on a subjective personal basis. On the main issue of principle—the International question—they agree with us. In this dispute over the French turn they differed from us, in opposition to the Oehler group, only by their opportunist conception of "organic unity." As to the turn itself, the main question, they were for it and had no point of contact with the position of the Oehler group. Likewise, they supported the fusion with the AWP, after first opposing it and then later giving us half-hearted passive support against the Oehlerites who remained recalcitrant almost up to the last moment. ***In spite of that they made a bloc with the Oehler group against us in the elections to the National Committee.*** This incident alone is sufficient to characterize this clique. In the Workers Party they continue the same kind of politics.

For six months prior to the June Plenum they were unable to bring forward a single political proposal in opposition to ours; they did not even present a formulated criticism. At the plenum they supported our international resolution for the prompt acceptance of the proposal to publish the Open Letter against that of Muste which meant unreasonable delay and the position of Oehler which meant an outright sabotage of the whole proposition. (Oehler's resolution proposed, as one of the "conditions" for acceptance, that the Open Letter contain a condemnation of the "new orientation of the ICL.") On the question of the Socialist Party they have differed from us only in the same sense as they differed on the French turn. They, like us, have put the question of entry or non-entry as a ***tactical*** question, rejecting Oehler's contention that it is a question everywhere of ***principle.*** But while we said decidedly that the French conditions do not apply here and that we must steer an independent course to a new party through fusion with the AWP, Weber's resolution prior to the last CLA convention implied a readiness to follow the French course in the U.S.

Politically the Weber group has no position of its own; where they do not follow us they keep silent altogether. But on ***organization*** questions, among which they include such a trifle as the leadership of the party, they always combine with the other groups against us. At the present time they are at the point of forming a closer bloc with Muste. Meanwhile they maintain that they are the true Bolshevik-Leninists—100 percent. The corrupting influence of such politics is all the more

dangerous because the national secretary of the Spartacus Youth—Gould—belongs to this clique and applies these methods there. The result is that the Oehler tendency has an undue influence in the New York youth. The straight-out fight which is needed to educate the youth against this tendency is continually muddled and sabotaged and the youth are thrown into confusion by this unprincipled game.

At the present time Weber and Glotzer agitate for "unity" as the main issue standing above the issues of principle and tactics involved in the party struggle. In doing so they obstruct to the full extent of their feeble powers the struggle to educate the party to the idea that the party unity must be established on a definite political basis. In the New York District elections the Weber-Glotzer group received a fraction more than ***five percent of the votes***—a striking testimony to the long education of our cadres in the school of principled politics.

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Objective conditions for the advancement of the party are beginning to develop very favorably. At the present time there is to be seen a considerable improvement in the economic activity of the country with rumblings of another, and probably deeper, strike movement. The threatened strike wave in the early part of the year was headed off by the labor bureaucracy in collaboration with the Roosevelt administration. Our party played a very important role in the Toledo strike which, for a time, threatened to result in a general strike of the automobile industry. It appears that rationalization of industry during the crisis years has virtually canceled out the effects of the rise in the economic conjuncture as far as employment is concerned. The number of the unemployed is still colossal—ten to fifteen million.

The prospects for the WP are greatly improved by the swing of both the Stalinist party and the Socialist Party to the right. The CP is rapidly applying the new turn of the CI and is becoming the left wing of patriotic liberalism. The Socialist Party has practically outlawed any opposition in its ranks to the theory of "democratic socialism," i.e., socialism by means of the ballot box. The sects which have broken with our international movement—Weisbord, Field, etc.—are reduced to complete isolation and impotence.

Our party has approximately 1,000 members. An influx of new members following the fusion convention was followed by a lull, partly to be attributed to the internal conflict. Now the beginning of a new expansion is to be seen—several new branches have been formed in the past month. We are still, for the most part, a propaganda circle. The left elements of the Socialist Party, especially since the sharp turn of the National Committee to the right, offer especially favorable grounds for us. But they can be brought to our side only by means of a firm internationalist policy and a flexible tactic. As we see it, a small party such as ours, faced with rivals of the size of the CP and the SP, can hope to make headway only if it is hard and firm in principle and highly disciplined.

We appreciate the value of unity and will do all we can to avoid a split. The best means to that end, in our opinion, is to conduct an aggressive and irreconcilable struggle against the sectarian tendency of the Oehler group which, combined with its disloyalty, is a menace to the party. Our aim is to isolate this tendency so that it will be unable to make a split of any serious proportions. This, it appears to us, has already been largely accomplished.

The question remains of the Muste group. As stated before, we are doing all we can to moderate the conflict with them and to allow time and experience to demonstrate the correctness of our position. We realized the value of the fusion, especially from the standpoint of our international movement, and were willing to pay "extra charges" for it on that account. But it would be folly, in our opinion, to pay the price of continuous instability of party policy and leadership. Muste has had no experience in a communist political movement. He has been accustomed to a loose organization in which conflicting policies and tendencies exist side by side, break out into open warfare, the differences are "patched up" by a compromise and then break out into the open again—and so on indefinitely. His "peace proposals" at the June Plenum were animated by this conception of organization. He, as well as Weber, counterpose this policy to ours which they say is a split tendency.

We admit that we do not make a principle of "unity," although we have no intention of taking the initiative for a split. Our interest is centered on the struggle to convince a majority of the party of the correctness of our political line and to have it reflected in the composition of the leadership as a guarantee that it will be carried out in practice. We would not deprive the Oehler group of representation in the leadership if they accept the decisions of the majority and observe discipline in action. But we are emphatically opposed to the idea of turning the party into a permanent discussion circle which begins the discussion all over again after the convention as though nothing had happened.

James P. Cannon

Letter by Glotzer to International Secretariat

20 November 1935

Chicago, Ill.

Dear Comrades:

My attention was drawn to a letter written by Comrade Cannon to the I.S. which appeared in the September *Internal Bulletin*, which letter purports to deal with the internal situation in the American party. I am compelled to write, not only because of the association of my name with that of Comrade Weber (which association I readily acknowledge), but more so because the letter of Comrade Cannon misrepresented the entire situation and falsely stated the disputes insofar as the Muste group and the Weber group are concerned. An additional reason for this letter is the fact that the communication of Cannon, which he says was purely private (even so, its contents are not justifiable) became a public matter.

The obvious impression which it aimed to create by the letter is: The American party has four groups, one is an "orthodox" ICL group (Cannon-Shachtman); the other three (Muste, Weber and Oehler) are in union as an anti-Trotskyist and anti-ICL bloc. Had the Cannon letter concerned itself with the Oehler group, such a characterization would have been justified. But the creation of an amalgam of the three groups becomes a fiction, invented out of the whole cloth. In order to set the facts aright, it is necessary to state as briefly as possible what were the relations of the groups prior to the October Plenum. I amplify these remarks with copies of the letters sent to LD. The contents of this letter will be further strengthened and confirmed by the communications from the New York comrades.

1. The June Plenum of our party observed four groups in existence. The party prior to the June Plenum had experienced a heated internal dispute with the Oehler group. The political motives behind this dispute lay in Oehler's persistent opposition to the French turn, and its international aspects. His group endeavored, in spite of the fact that the party had only just become organized and had not entered into a discussion period, to organize the party against the views of LD, the ICL and the French organization. He attempted to do that, naturally, on the basis of winning *political* support to his point of view.

It is necessary to bear in mind at all times that our party is the result of a fusion with the AWP. That section of the party had no real acquaintance with the French turn, the activities and policies of the ICL. The Oehler agitation was gaining ground simply because there was no counteracting influence in the party to this agitation. ***The Cannon group proceeded on the notion that it could solve the problem of the Oehler group without a necessary and thorough-going political discussion with the aim of the complete clarification of the party organization.*** It proceeded on the assumption that the way to liquidate the problem was simply through the medium of the expulsion of the Oehler group. That is the course it pursued. They sought to expel the Oehler group at the June 1935 Plenum of the party—that is, at a time when the party had not discussed a single issue in dispute, at a time when a section of the party (the Muste group) was almost unaware of the political issues involved. Such a course would not and could not have clarified the political differences, would have (as was indicated at the June Plenum) alienated the Musteites, and permitted the exit of the Oehler group with about 200 followers (the support he claimed prior to the discussion in the party).

The Muste group was, I dare say, somewhat bewildered by the events in the party. The Cannon group—with the position that the party could not then entertain political discussions, but must do practical work! (as if such a separation is feasible or conducive to the healthy life of the party)—proceeded to put it into practice by failing to discuss the burning international questions. The March Plenum took up the International question thru the "intervention" of LD in the form of a private letter to Cannon suggesting that the WP enter into fraternal relations with the ICL. There was no difficulty on this score. The former AWP members on the NC readily accepted the proposal and belied the fear of the Cannon group that we must not move too fast! (as if the question of speed was involved) since the Musteites would not be assimilated quickly. Between March and June, again a period of no action, no discussion, etc. on international questions, except in the bad form that it was raised by the Oehler group. The arrival of the Open Letter compelled the leadership to concern itself once more with the International question.

At the June Plenum, three questions presented themselves on the above. The Cannon resolution called for unequivocal support of the Open Letter. ***This position supported and thereby enabled it to obtain a majority in the plenum.*** The Muste group, while supporting the Open Letter, as a result of their incomplete knowledge of the situation and the confusion created by the Oehler group, took a position which involved some delay in the publication of the Open Letter (they wished to seek

more signatures, etc.). The Oehler group introduced a resolution denouncing the ICL, the French turn, etc., making such proposals as would render the Open Letter impossible. Our group took one step further than Cannon. We foresaw that the party would have to concern itself with the *issues* in dispute, that it would be necessary for it to *discuss* the French turn, the other international questions and the issue of the Fourth International in order to put an end to the agitation of the Oehlerites and *to render a decisive political defeat to that group.* While supporting the Cannon resolution, we introduced a supplementary statement (signed by Weber, Satir and Glotzer) which dealt specifically with the French turn and called for its support by the party (more evidence of an anti-ICL position!!). In presenting this statement we declared it our intention to begin the discussion on the political differences existing on the international questions and the aim to win the party to the support of the ICL. What should have the Cannon group done? It should have declared its support of our declaration. *Instead it turned its heaviest attack on us.* We could not accept their support of the ICL as being of the best kind, nor sufficient by any stretch of the imagination. Their arguments: the Weber group could not support the Cannon group, the Weber group had to present its own statement, the Weber group was a clique! And for what? Because we declared it necessary for the party to record itself on the disputed questions and because we declared it necessary for the party to support the ICL and the French turn, and proceeded to outline the reasons why. We had an additional reason for issuing that statement: to attempt to put the real issues before the Musteites in order to counteract the Oehler agitation. The Cannon group, instead of joining with us in this endeavor, turned around and attacked us for it.

A brief word on "history." The Cannon letter declared falsely that the Weber group formed a sort of opposition to the fusion. The Weber group constituted itself only immediately before the CLA convention (November 1934) and at the convention. It is also stated that the Weber group made a bloc with the Oehler group at that time. The bloc consisted in this: Oehler's agreement to vote for Weber as a member of the National Committee and the rights of all viewpoints to be represented on the NC. It was revealed in the discussions at the CLA convention that the Cannon group had proposed a bloc to Oehler in order to fight the Weber group, with whom they were in supposed political agreement. The tone to our relations with the Cannon group was set by Shachtman, then a new spokesman for the Cannon group, who in his closing remarks at the convention stated: *We can collaborate with the Oehler group but we cannot collaborate with the Weber group!*

2. Then followed the question of orientation to the Socialist Party in America. We had sufficient basis to believe that the Cannon group had the perspective of the WP entering the SPUSA. They made no effort to clarify their own position. Their previous actions, their speeches and private conversations only confirmed this belief. The resolution introduced by them, coupled with their former actions, only made their position all the more ambiguous. And it was necessary, particularly because of the agitation of the Oehler group to the effect that Cannon was preparing the WP for entrance into the SP because he supported the French turn, to speak out clearly. For the Oehlerites, anyone who supported the French turn must inevitably end up in the SP. The Cannon group would not budge from its position and we presented our own resolution. It was brief and to the point. It rejected an SP orientation and declared for the independent existence of the WP, the organization of the party work under this conception, and similarly, the organization of effective work in the SP. Muste likewise had his own resolutions, and the Oehler group had their own sectarian position. No resolution carried. The question was not settled at the plenum nor was clarification obtained in this meeting of the NC.

3. And finally the question of the internal situation. Here was revealed the whole approach of the Cannon group to the deep political disputes. As I already stated above, the Cannon group sought to settle these differences simply by the expulsion of the Oehler group. That course—the method of organizational liquidation of political disputes prior to discussion and clarification—was rejected. The party was on the border of split at the plenum. We rejected organizational measures against the Oehler group in order to prevent him from raising the cry of "bureaucratic persecution" prior to a discussion, and in order to begin the political discussions without the stigma of such organizational measures, so that the discussion could proceed freely without any taint. We felt certain that a discussion would decimate the ranks of the Oehlerites and had nothing to fear from such a discussion. We felt that it was necessary to win the party ideologically. That is why we rejected the Cannon course, which would have meant without a doubt a split in the party. The Muste group supported our position and Muste himself adduced evidence, in the form of a letter from Cannon, that their intention was to expel Oehler at the June Plenum and to settle the disputes in that manner.

4. From all of this, briefly as I have stated the facts as they were, Cannon deduces his bloc! And what really happened? Between the June and October Plenums the party entered a protracted period of discussion. The

Oehler group, as we forecasted, suffered blow after blow in the discussion. They lost heavily. In the meantime our group, instead of trying to build a large faction, deemed it more important to win the leadership of the former AWP to our point of view on the French turn. While the Cannon group was charging up and down the party [that there was] an anti-Trotskyist bloc of Muste-Weber-Oehler (a dishonest method as it was sure to drive Muste to Oehler, if it were not for our intervention), we carried on discussions with Muste and his comrades. The result? We succeeded in arriving at agreement on ***all*** the political questions facing the party, destroying the possibility of any bloc between the Muste and the Oehler groups, and thereby winning a most important section of the party to the French turn. That accomplished, a joint statement was drawn up in support of the French turn, signed by Muste, Weber, Johnson, Lore, Satir, Gould and Glotzer (and supported by McKinney with a statement). We presented this statement to the PC in response to its invitation that all resolutions be prepared and presented to the PC. It became the first document for the October Plenum and settled finally the questions: what would the Muste group do.

In the meantime the friendly advice of LD helped considerably to liquidate, at least for the October Plenum, any SP orientation; to solve the internal relations among all anti-Oehlerites in the party, so that they might collaborate in the fight against the latter. What made it possible that the three groups could collaborate at the October Plenum was agreement on the International question, agreement on the party-building resolution, the war question and finally the internal situation.

When presented with our French turn resolution, Cannon signified his intention of supporting it. For the October Plenum, his group drew up another resolution on the International question dealing with the contact commission, etc. We agreed with it. Cannon was ready to make our French turn resolution the document of the majority of the PC. At the plenum, however, they could not find it possible to vote for our resolution and instead introduced a substitute, making it basic material for another resolution to be more comprehensive and to deal with Belgium, Spain, Chile, etc. We regarded their refusal to vote for our French turn resolution as an example of their factional pride and nothing else. Having come to agreement on the party-building resolution and the war question we were able to confront the Oehler group with a ***politically*** united plenum against their point of view and thus be able to demand of them to cease breaking party discipline, to accept the decisions of the plenum, to refrain from taking the party disputes outside of the party; if not, then they were liable for expulsion.

Following the October Plenum, the Oehler group, already proceeding on the basis that it could not remain in the party, began to sell its illegal bulletins publicly from the newsstands, attacked the party at its mass meetings and finally arranged its own mass meetings. The break with them is now consummated. They have at the most 75 members nationally, adult and youth. They are losing support daily.

5. In view of what transpired how is it possible to reconcile events to the Cannon letter? There was never a bloc between us and Oehler. Our existence was based on our profound differences with the Cannon group and with all others. We fought for a point of view in the party, and I think very successfully. Now the party has reached a concord on the main political questions which were disputed up until October. It is possible to unite the party for work. If what the Cannon letter stated [were true]—that Muste was moving toward the conservative elements and turned his back toward his left development; that we were a clique of an unprincipled kind, in a bloc with the anti-Trotskyists—the achievements of the October Plenum would never have been possible. The Cannon letter was a lie from beginning to end. It misrepresented the facts of our party. It tried to create an amalgam—a practice which is very shoddy and should be left to its inventors. And now the letter is torn to shreds by the events.

An example of what I mean. The letter states or insinuates that the Oehlerites gained strength in the Spartacus Youth organization because of the role of Comrade Nathan Gould, National Secretary of the Spartacus Youth League, who is a member of our group. First of all, Comrade Gould was on a three-month national tour, initiated shortly after the outbreak of the struggle in New York. Up until the time Gould left on his tour, not only was the SYL experiencing very good growth, but the Oehlerites' following could be counted on one hand. At that time Gould was even successful in breaking Comrade Streeter (the only NC member of the SYL who supported Oehler) from supporting the Oehler group in the party. Streeter returned to the Oehler fold only after Gould left for his tour.

Following the June Plenum, Gould fell ill, was in an auto accident together with other plenum delegates and spent a good portion of time in the hospital. During his long absence the Cannonite representatives among the young were in charge and during that period the Oehlerites made their gains in the youth organization in New York. Only when Gould returned to his post did that trend cease. It is generally acknowledged too that during his absence from the Center the SYL work seriously declined and again experienced progress and growth upon his return.

We might further point out that recently Gould was sent by the Secretariat of the Workers Party to Chicago to combat the Oehlerites (this was on the eve of their split from the WP). Gould was most instrumental in reducing the Oehlerite following in the SYL there to four.

In passing I may mention that the party representative to the Youth during all this time was Comrade Shachtman. Is it too much to suggest that he was in a position to check Oehlerist tendencies in the Youth, but quite obviously did not?

What now? That remains to be seen. The October Plenum liquidated the Oehler group. On the basis of the agreements arrived at in New York, it should be possible to unite the party so that it may be able to carry out its mountainous tasks. On our part, we intend to do everything possible to help the party accomplish the above. I shall endeavor to keep you informed from time to time as to developments in this country.

Albert Glotzer

Appendix III

National Committee of the Workers Party U.S.

December 1934

	From CLA	From AWP
Full Members	James P. Cannon	Gerry Allard
	Vincent Dunne	J. D. Arrington
	Albert Glotzer	Louis Budenz
	Sam Gordon	James Burnham
	Morris Lewit	H. Howe
	Hugo Oehler	A. Johnson
	Norman Satir	Karl Lore
	Max Shachtman	Ernest McKinney
	Carl Skoglund	A. J. Muste
	Tom Stamm	A. Ramuglia
	Arne Swabeck	W. Truax
Alternate Members	Louis Basky	L. Breier
	George Clarke	L. Heimbach
	Jack Weber	Ted Selander

Glossary

Abern, Martin (1898-1949) Joined SP youth, 1912; SP, 1915; IWW, 1916; founding American Communist, on Central Executive Committee almost continuously from 1920; national secretary of CP youth, 1922-24; CP Chicago organizer, 1924-26; ILD assistant national secretary, 1926-28; delegate to CI Fourth Congress, and to YCI Second Congress where elected to YCI Executive, 1922; member of CP's Cannon faction; expelled from CP in 1928 for Trotskyism; CLA National Committee 1929-34; a leader of Shachtman faction in 1931-33 fight; continued cliquist opposition to Cannon thereafter; member WPUS, 1934-36; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936-37; founding member of SWP and on NC 1938-40; split from Trotskyist movement with Shachtman in 1940; elected to NC of Shachtmanite WP, 1940; remained in WP until his death.

American Workers Party (AWP) Successor organization to CPLA; founded as Provisional Organizing Committee for the American Workers Party in December, 1933; led by A. J. Muste; AWP and affiliated unemployed leagues led successful Toledo Auto-Lite strike, spring 1934; fused with CLA to form WPUS, December 1934.

Basky, Louis (1882-1938) Veteran of 1919 Hungarian Revolution; emigrated to U.S. and became leader of CP's Hungarian Federation in 1920s; he and a group of supporters, expelled from CP in 1927-28, were independently won to Trotskyism by Russian Oppositionists in New York; founding member of CLA; co-opted briefly to CLA National Committee, 1932; founding member of WPUS; expelled with Oehlerites in late 1935; founding member Revolutionary Workers League (RWL); expelled from RWL with Stamm in March 1938.

Bauer, Eugen (b. 1906) Joined Young Communists in Berlin, 1926; head of the Left Opposition in Saxony; member of ILO International Secretariat, 1932-33; leader of clandestine ILO section in Germany, 1933; opposed French turn and broke with ILO, 1934; later joined centrist S.A.P.

Budenz, Louis (1891-1972) Editor of *Labor Age*, 1921-33; founding member CPLA and its first national secretary, 1929; AWP 1933-34; part of AWP right wing, opposed fusion with CLA; joined CP in October 1935, following its adoption of the popular-front policy; managing editor of CP's *Daily Worker*, 1940-45; broke with communist movement, 1945, and returned to Roman Catholicism; by October 1946 became fervent anti-communist, appeared as government witness in numerous proceedings and in Smith Act trials.

Burnham, James (1905-1986) (Pseudonym: John West) Philosophy professor, New York University; influenced by Sidney Hook, joined Musteite AWP; founding member WPUS and member National Committee, 1934-36; co-editor with Shachtman of *New International*, 1934-40; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936-37; founding member of SWP and on NC 1938-40; ideological leader of SWP minority in 1939-40 faction fight; broke with Marxism altogether and resigned from Shachtman's WP, May 1940; became prominent Cold Warrior in late 1940s; founding editorial board member of right-wing *National Review*, 1955.

Cannon, James Patrick (1890-1974) Joined SP in 1908; quit SP in 1911 and joined IWW; IWW agitator and organizer throughout Midwest, 1912-14; active in Kansas City IWW, 1914-19; joined pro-Bolshevik SP Left Wing, 1919; founding American Communist and chairman of first legal Communist party 1921-23; in Moscow 1922-23, serving on Presidium of the Communist International June-November 1922; CP Central Executive Committee, 1920-28; won to Trotskyism at Sixth CI Congress in summer 1928, expelled in October for his views; founding leader of CLA, 1929; remained principal leader and member of National Committee of American Trotskyist organizations for next 25 years; retired as SWP National Secetary in 1953, but remained National Chairman until his death.

Carter, Joe (1910-1970) Member SP youth, 1924; joined Communist youth, 1928; founding member of CLA; leader of SYL and editorial board member, *Young Spartacus*; supporter of Shachtman faction in 1931-33 fight; founding member of WPUS and on National Committee, 1936; founding member of SWP and alternate member of NC, 1938-40; split from Trotskyist movement with Shachtman, 1940; a leading member of Shachtman's WP in 1940s; left Shachtmanites in early 1950s.

Communist International (CI, or Comintern) Also known as Third International. International revolutionary organization founded on Lenin's initiative in Moscow, 1919; national Communist parties were sections of the International. Underwent degeneration after 1923 as Stalin faction consolidated control of Soviet state; dissolved by Stalin in 1943.

Communist League of America (CLA) Organization of American Trotskyists, 1929-34; published newspaper *Militant*; launched theoretical journal *New International*, July 1934; fused with Muste's AWP to form WPUS, December 1934.

Communist Party (CP) Used generically to refer to the American Communist movement. Two Communist groups split from the American Socialist Party (SP) in 1919; one was the Communist Labor Party (CLP),

the other was the Communist Party of America (CPA); the various American Communist groups fused in the early 1920s under the urging of the Comintern. In 1921, the Workers Party (WP) was launched as the legal arm of the still-underground CP; it changed its name to the Workers (Communist) Party in 1925; in 1929 it reverted to the name Communist Party.

Conference for Progressive Labor Action (CPLA) Founded in 1929 by A. J. Muste; heterogeneous formation encompassing leftward-moving workers and unemployed leagues; changed name to AWP, December 1933 (see also entry for AWP).

Edwards, John Member SP left wing in Michigan, 1919; founding member American Communist movement; delegate to YCI Second Congress, 1922; attended Fifth Comintern Congress, 1924; member brickmakers union in Chicago; expelled from CP 1928; founding member of CLA and alternate on National Committee, 1931-34; close collaborator of Glotzer in Chicago, 1932-34; made pretense of being in separate "Chicago group," but supported Shachtman faction on all essentials in 1931-33 fight.

Field, B. J. (1900-1977) Joined CLA, 1931; expelled for violating discipline, 1932; visited Trotsky in Turkey, 1932; regained CLA membership, 1933; expelled for violating party discipline during 1934 New York hotel strike; later formed League for a Revolutionary Workers Party which published *New International Bulletin* irregularly from October 1935 to March 1937; following expulsion of Field, the LRWP vanished.

French Turn Tactic of entry into Social Democratic parties, advocated by Trotsky for France in late 1934; subsequently applied to other countries internationally.

Glotzer, Albert (1908-1999) Joined CP youth, 1923; leader of Chicago CP District; CP youth national executive, 1927-28; supporter of CP's Cannon faction; expelled from CP for Trotskyism in 1928; founding CLA member and on National Committee, 1929-34; supporter of Shachtman faction in 1931-33 fight; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1934-36; member of Abern-Weber clique; entered SP with Trotskyists 1936-37; founding member of SWP and on NC, 1938-40; split from Trotskyist movement with Shachtman in 1940; leader of Shachtmanite WP/ISL; liquidated with Shachtman into SP-SDF, 1958.

Gould, Nathan Joined SYL in Chicago, early 1930s; member SYL National Committee, and by 1935 SYL national secretary; founding member of WPUS, 1934; entered SP with Trotskyists 1936-37; became secretary of Chicago YPSL, 1936; founding member of SWP; was delegate with Cannon and Shachtman at founding conference of Fourth International in September 1938; SWP NC 1939-40; split from Trotskyist movement with Shachtman in 1940; departed Shachtmanite ISL around 1954.

Hook, Sidney (1902-1989) Student of John Dewey and professor of philosophy department at New York University, 1933-70; best known as author of *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* (1933) and *From Hegel to Marx* (1936); leader of Muste's AWP, 1933-34; retired from the AWP after giving approval to fusion with CLA; active in campaign to defend Leon Trotsky against Moscow Trial charges, 1937; by 1940 broke entirely with Marxism and socialism; by 1950s was anti-communist and ardent Cold Warrior.

Independent Socialist Party (OSP—Onafhankelijke Socialistische Partij) Organization formed from left-wing split from the Dutch Social Democratic Labor Party in 1932; signer of "Declaration of Four," 1933.

Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) Founded in 1905 as a revolutionary industrial union movement; declined in the aftermath of WWI and the Russian Revolution.

International Labor Defense (ILD) Organization created by the CP in 1925 to organize united-front defense for class-war prisoners regardless of political affiliation; led by James P. Cannon from 1925 to 1928; dissolved in 1946.

International Left Opposition (ILO) International organization of Trotskyists, 1929-33; changed name to the International Communist League in August 1933 when Trotskyists ceased to function as an expelled faction of the Communist International and embarked on struggle to form new revolutionary workers parties and a new International.

Lewit, Morris (1903-1998) (Also known by pseudonym, Morris Stein) Participant as youth in Russian Revolution; emigrated to New York, 1920; founding member Communist youth, 1922; supporter of CP's Foster faction; along with his life-long companion, Sylvia Bleeker, became sympathetic to views of Trotsky's Left Opposition; expelled from CP, joined CLA, 1930; edited CLA's Yiddish-language *Unser Kampf*; supporter of Shachtman faction in 1931-33 fight; he and Shachtman went over to collaboration with Cannon in 1934; founding member of WPUS and on National Committee, 1934-36; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936-37; founding member of SWP and on NC, 1938 through the early 1960s; served as SWP acting national secretary following imprisonment of SWP leaders under Smith Act convictions, 1943-45.

Lhuillier, René (1909-1968) Secretary of the CGT's hairdressers' union, entered the French Communist Party in 1928; later affiliated with the French section of

ILO; opposed the French turn on principle, 1934; eventually entered SFIO and remained there even after the French Trotskyists were expelled.

MacDonald, Jack (1888-1941) Leader of 1919 Toronto metal workers strike and Ontario labor leader; co-founder with Maurice Spector of Canadian Communist Party, 1921; represented Canadian CP at Fourth Congress of Comintern, 1922; although he acquiesced when Spector was purged for Trotskyism in 1928, he was himself expelled in 1931; declared for ILO in 1932 and joined CLA's Toronto branch; retired from active political work in 1936, but remained committed to Marxism until his death in November 1941.

McKinney, Ernest Rice (1886-1984) Joined SP around 1910 and the NAACP in 1911; worked with W. E. B. DuBois to form an NAACP branch at Oberlin College; member CP, 1920-26; founding Musteite and leader of CPLA/AWP 1929-34; founding member of WPUS and on National Committee, 1934-36; entered the SP with the Trotskyists, 1936-37; founder of SWP and on NC, 1938-40; split from Trotskyist movement with Shachtman, 1940; trade-union director in Shachtman's WP; in 1946 ran as WP candidate for Congress in Harlem; quit Shachtmanites in 1950.

Muste, Abraham Johannes (1885-1967) Ordained as minister in the Reformed Church in 1909; pacifist in WWI, became national committeeman of the ACLU; leader of the textile worker strikes in Paterson, NJ and Lawrence, MA in 1919; became director of Brookwood Labor College in 1921; founder and principal leader of CPLA/AWP 1929-34; WPUS National Committee and national secretary, 1934-36; opposed entry of Trotskyists into the SP in 1936 and returned to religion and pacifist activism; established the American Forum for Socialist Education in late 1950s, attempting to broker a regroupment among socialists; active opponent of U.S. imperialist war in Vietnam at time of death.

Oehler, Hugo (1903-1983) CP District Organizer in Kansas City in 1920s; supporter of CP's Cannon faction; won to views of the Left Opposition following Cannon's expulsion; remained undercover in the CP for a year; helped lead CP work in 1929 Gastonia, North Carolina, textile strike; joined CLA in June 1930; CLA National Committee 1931-34; supporter of Cannon in 1931-33 fight; in 1934 began sectarian opposition, attempting to obstruct fusion with AWP and opposing French turn; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1934-35; expelled in October 1935; founding leader of Revolutionary Workers League 1935-41; went to Spain and was active in Spanish Revolution, 1937; ceased to be RWL leader when he moved to Denver, 1941; RWL disappeared in 1950s.

OSP See Independent Socialist Party

Resident Committee The name Shachtman uses for the CLA's equivalent of a Political Committee. The body was composed of all members of the National Committee resident in New York City.

Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP—Revolutionair-Socialistische Partij) Dutch Trotskyist organization formed in 1929 by ex-members of the Communist Party; led by Henricus Sneevliet; signer of "Declaration of Four" in August 1933; joined ICL in 1933; fused with OSP and became Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party (RSAP) in 1935; broke with movement for the Fourth International in 1938.

Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party (RSAP—Revolutionair-Socialistische Arbeiderspartij) Dutch Trotskyist Party formed by the merger of the RSP and OSP in March 1935.

Salutsky (Hardman), J. B. (1882-1968) Joined Jewish Bund in 1902 and participated in 1905 Russian Revolution; emigrated to U.S., 1909; secretary of the SP's Jewish Federation, 1912-13 and editor of *Di Naye Welt*, 1914-20; opposed SP Left Wing in 1919 and prevented Jewish Federation from going over to CP; broke with SP in 1921 and helped form Workers Council which then fused with Communists; CP Central Executive Committee 1921-23; expelled from CP in 1923 for publicly criticizing the party in his paper, the *American Labor Monthly*; leading member of Muste's CPLA/AWP in early 1930s; strongly opposed the fusion with the CLA in 1934 and quit the movement shortly afterward; education director of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union, 1920-40 and editor of its journal *Advance*, 1940-44; having added Hardman to his last name in 1924, he is known as Salutsky, Hardman or Salutsky-Hardman in the period relevant to this bulletin.

Satir, Norman Member of Chicago CLA; supporter of Shachtman faction in 1931-33 fight; founding member of WPUS and on National Committee 1934-36; member of Abern-Weber clique; entered SP with Trotskyists 1936-37; founding member of SWP; split from Trotskyist movement with Shachtman in 1940.

Shachtman, Max (1904-1972) Joined CP in 1921 as member of Workers Council; leader of Communist youth work, 1923-27; editor of ILD's *Labor Defender*, 1925-28; alternate member of Central Executive Committee, 1927-28; supporter of CP's Cannon faction; expelled for Trotskyism in 1928; founding member of the CLA and on National Committee, 1929-34; editor of U.S. Trotskyist publications, including *Militant* and *New International*; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936-37; founding SWP member and on NC 1938-40;

split from Trotskyist movement in 1940 in opposition to Trotskyist position of unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union; founding member and leader of Workers Party and its 1949 successor, the Independent Socialist League (ISL); led liquidation of ISL into SP-SDF, 1958; became member of Democratic Party and social-patriot.

Socialist Party of France (SFIO—Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière) French section of the reformist Second International.

Socialist Workers Party of Germany (S.A.P.—Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands) Formed in October 1931 by left-wing group expelled from German Social Democratic Party; in 1932, acquired a group which split from the Brandlerite German Right Opposition and which subsequently assumed leadership of the S.A.P.; one of the signers of "The Declaration of Four," August 1933; later moved to the right and opposed formation of the FI.

Spartacus Youth League (SYL) Youth group of the CLA; began publication of *Young Spartacus* in December 1931.

Spector, Maurice (1898-1968) Founder of Canadian CP, 1921; served as national chairman, 1924-28; privately sympathized with Trotskyist opposition from 1924; delegate to CI Sixth Congress in 1928 and elected to ECCI; in Moscow he and Cannon made a private pact to build support for Trotsky back home; expelled from Canadian party in late 1928; founding member of CLA and member National Committee, 1929-34; supporter of Shachtman faction in 1931-33 fight; leader of separate organization of Canadian Trotskyists formed in 1934; elected to WPUS NC, 1936; SWP NC 1938-39; resigned from the movement in 1939.

Stamm, Tom Joined CLA October 1930; supporter of Cannon faction in the 1931-33 fight; circulation director of CLA's *Militant*; part of Oehler faction 1934-35; member WPUS National Committee 1934-35; expelled with Oehler in late 1935; a leader of Oehler's Revolutionary Workers League (RWL); expelled with Basky from RWL in 1938; formed organization, also called RWL, which published *Revolt* from March 1938 to January 1940.

Sterling, Max Joined CP youth, 1927; supporter of Lovestone faction; expelled for Trotskyism in 1930; joined CLA; supporter of Shachtman faction in 1931-33 fight; member of the Abern-Weber clique; member WPUS 1934-36; went with Muste to visit Trotsky in Norway, summer 1936; subsequently went to Spain and sent reports on Civil War to Trotskyist press; founding member, SWP; split from Trotskyist movement with Shachtman, 1940; member of Shachtman's WP and leader of Bay Area branch; left WP after WWII. Known later as Mark Sharron.

Swabeck, Arne (1890-1986) Joined SP left wing, 1916; editor of SP's Scandinavian Federation weekly press; IWW member, 1918-20; one of the leaders of 1919 Seattle general strike; joined CP, 1920; delegate to CI Fourth Congress in 1922, represented American CP on the ECCI; member of CP's Cannon faction; expelled for Trotskyism in 1928; founding member of CLA and member of National Committee, 1929-34; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1934-36; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936-37; founding member of SWP and NC member, 1938-67; began to advocate political support to Mao's Chinese Stalinists in late 1950s; expelled from the SWP, 1967; briefly a member of Progressive Labor Party in late 1960s.

Weber, Jack (b. 1896) (Pseudonym of Louis Jacobs) Joined CLA in 1930; supporter of Shachtman faction in 1931-33 fight; founding member WPUS 1934-36; spokesman for Abern clique, 1934-36; alternate member of WPUS National Committee 1934-36; supported SP entry and broke with Abern, 1936; founding member of SWP and NC member, 1938 through at least 1940; left SWP in 1944; contributed three articles to the Shachtmanite *New International* in 1946-47, but does not appear to have actually joined Shachtman's WP.

Weisbord, Albert (1900-1977) SP youth leader, 1921-24; joined CP, 1924; organizer of heroic Passaic strike, 1926-27; supporter of CP's Lovestone faction; expelled with Lovestone, 1929; advocated unity of Trotskyists and Lovestoneites; founded Communist League of Struggle (CLS), 1931; tried to gain entry into ILO but was never accepted; visited Trotsky in Prinkipo, 1932; worked with centrist POUM in Spain, 1937; disbanded CLS, 1937.

West, John See James Burnham.

Young Communist International (YCI) International organization of the youth groups of the Communist parties of the Comintern.

Zack, Joseph (1897-1963) Founding American Communist, 1919; led work of the CP in Harlem; supporter of CP's Foster faction, elected to the Central Executive Committee in 1927; attended Lenin School in Moscow, 1927-30; led the CP's Trade Union Unity League in New York but developed differences when the CP abandoned Third Period dual-unionism policy; expelled from the CP in 1934; briefly a member of WPUS in 1935 where he blocked with Oehler; testified for prosecution in anti-communist witchhunt proceedings from 1938.

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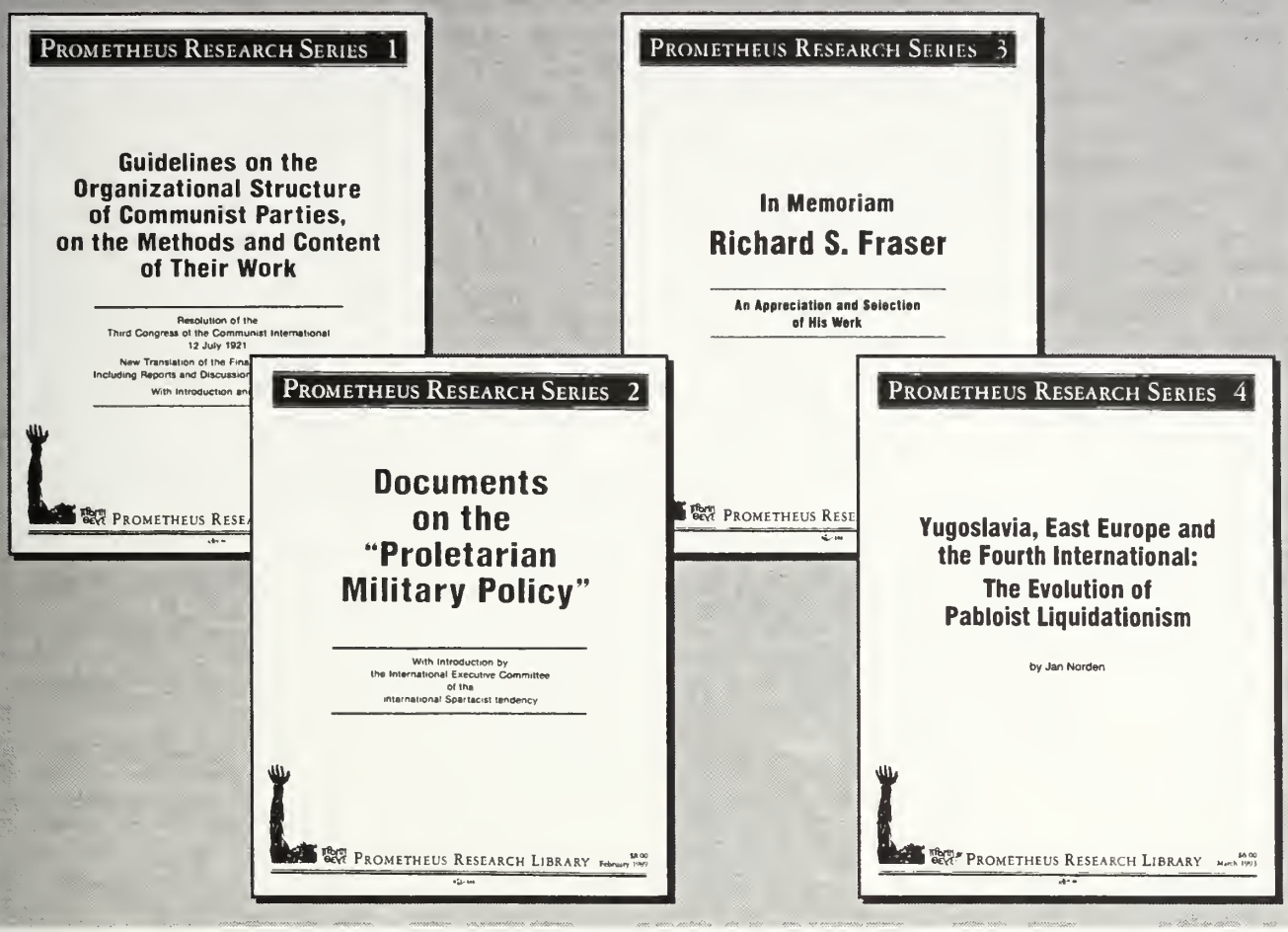
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